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ANNIVERSARY SERMONS

DELIVERED AT THE REQUEST

OF THE

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,

BY THE FOLLOWING GENTLEMEN:

REV. DR. WAYLAND OF RHODE ISLAND,
" HUMPHREYS OF MASSACHUSETTS,
" HODGE OF NEW JERSEY,
" HENSHAW OF MARYLAND,
" FERRIS OF NEW YORK,
MR. BLAGDEN OF MASSACHUSETTS,
" TAYLOR OF VIRGINIA,
DR. TYNG OF PENNSYLVANIA,
" SCHMUCKER OF PENNSYLVANIA.

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,

No. 146. Chestnut street,
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P R E F A C E.

FROM the year 1830 it has been the practice of the Board of Officers and Managers of the American Sunday-school Union to devote the evening previous to the Anniversary meeting to religious services. On each of these occasions (with the exception of 1838) a sermon has been preached, which has been afterwards printed and widely distributed. For the sake of convenience and better preservation they have been collected together in the present volume.

The Board suppose that the same reasons which make the sermon an important portion of the annual exercises, will insure a permanent demand for them when published. By this mode the Sunday-school institution is identified with the other agencies that are founded in the principles of the Gospel; the relation it holds to the progress of Christianity and the welfare of the church is exemplified, and the corresponding duty of Christians made prominent. It is thus solemnly brought into the sanctuary by the ministers of Christ, and presented, in all its claims, to the contemplation of his disciples.

We need not say that discourses on this important subject from the pens of the Rev. Drs. WAYLAND and TAYLOR of the Baptist Church, HENSHAW and TYNG of the Episcopalian, HUMPHREY and BLAGDEN of the Congregational, HODGE of the Presbyterian, FERRIS of the Reformed Dutch, and SCHMUCKER of the Lutheran Church, constitute a volume of peculiar value—setting forth the views entertained by men of different ecclesiastical relations, residing in different sections of the country, and treating the subject according to their various apprehensions of its connexions and bearings.

The coincidence of their testimony and sentiments is also made more forcible by the variety of their avocations; two being presidents of colleges, two theological professors, and the five others pastors.

It is hoped that a large number of teachers, parents and ministers will be glad to make this a standard volume in their libraries.

ENCOURAGEMENTS

TO

RELIGIOUS EFFORT:

A SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE REQUEST OF THE AMERICAN
SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION,

MAY 25, 1830.



BY FRANCIS WAYLAND, JR.

President of Brown University.



PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE BOARD OF MANAGERS
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1830.

ENCOURAGEMENTS

■■■

RELIGIOUS EFFORT.

A SERMON.



■ *Thy Kingdom Come."*—Matthew vi. 10.

THE cause of Sabbath Schools, my brethren, at the present day, and before such an audience as this, needs no advocate. If there be a God, a heaven, and a hell ; if man be immortal and capable of religion, and if his present existence be probationary ; if he be a sinner, and if there be but one way of salvation ; and if youth be the season in which moral cultivation may be most successfully bestowed ; then, surely, the importance of inculcating upon the young the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, may be taken for granted. Supposing these truths admitted, we shall therefore proceed to another branch of the general subject, which this occasion suggests, and invite your attention to an illustration of some of the encouragements, which the present state of society offers, to an effort for the universal diffusion of Christianity.

It is the general misfortune of man, to be wise a century too late. We look back with astonishment upon

those means for guiding the destinies of our race, which preceding generations have enjoyed; and we see how, in the possession of our present knowledge, we might then have lived gloriously. We forget that no man lives to purpose, who does not live for posterity. Should I then be so happy as to direct your views only for a few years forward; should the Spirit of all wisdom teach each one of us the responsibility which rests upon the men of the passing generation; we shall, through eternity, bless God, that he has permitted us to assemble at this time to deliberate upon the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.

It will be convenient to my purpose, to commence this discussion by a brief allusion to the nature of the Reformation by Luther. You have all been accustomed to consider this, as by far the most interesting portion of the history of man, since the time of the Apostles. In many respects it is so. Its results, although daily multiplying, are already incalculable. The fabric of ancient society began then to crumble, and a more beautiful edifice to arise from amid its ruins. Besides this, there is much of the moral picturesque with which every view is crowded. An imaginative man kindles into enthusiasm at the recital of every transaction. The leaders, on both sides, were men of consummate ability, and of revolutionary energy. The fiercest passions of the human heart, in an age almost ignorant of law, stimulated them to contention unto death. Hence the whole period presents an almost unbroken succession of battles and sieges; of foreign war and intestine commotion; of brutal persecution, and of dignified endurance; and all this is rendered yet more impressive by the fre-

quent vision of racks, and dungeons, of torture, and exile; of the assassin's dagger, and the martyr's stake. It need not then seem surprising, if this strong appeal to the imagination somewhat bewilder the reason, and if the impressive circumstances attendant upon the change, too much divert our attention from the nature of the change itself. These violent commotions, like friction in machinery, rather disclose the nature of the materials and the amount of the resistance, than the direction of the force, or the celerity of the movement.

But let us now, for a moment, draw aside these attending circumstances, and in what light does the Reformation present itself to our view? Simply as a period in which the creation of new forces changed the relation which had previously existed between the elements of society. A new and most powerful order of men arose suddenly into being, and institutions, cemented by the lapse of ages, required no inconsiderable modification to meet the unexpected exigency. In the midst of all this, a new moral impulse was communicated to society, by which these changes were rendered beneficial to man, and the blessings which they conferred were perpetuated to the present generation.

To illustrate this very briefly—You may be aware that at about the period of the Reformation, great changes were wrought in the physical condition of man. The discovery of America, and of a passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope, and of the use of the mariner's compass, opened exhaustless fountains of wealth to commerce and manufactures. Labour became, of course, vastly more valuable, and artisans became possessed of the means of independence. Hence a new order of men,

■ middling class, was created. Power and wealth, and education, were placed within the reach of a vastly greater number. The moral centre of gravity settled towards the base of the social cone. The rod of feudal vassalage was broken, and men were first acknowledged to possess rights which they did not derive from hereditary succession.

Beside this, the invention of the printing press furnished, at the same time, new means for intellectual culture. This astonishing instrument multiplies indefinitely the power of thought. It transfers the sceptre of empire from matter to mind. It enables genius to multiply, to any extent, the copies of its own conceptions. Hence the facilities for intellectual cultivation were abundantly bestowed upon this new order of men, to which commerce and manufactures had given birth.

But above all, it pleased God to raise up, in the persons of the reformers, men of a character equal to the crisis. They were men who counted not their lives dear unto them when a moral change was to be effected. In despite of every thing appalling in the form of opposition, they studied, they argued, they preached, they wrote, they translated, they printed, they employed for the promotion of true religion, all those means which the progress of society had placed within their power. They thus gave the impression of Christianity to the changes which were going forward; and that their labours formed by far the most important link in the chain of events which is denominated the Reformation, may be evident from the fact, that no where, but in Protestant countries, have the blessings resulting from the social changes, to which we have alluded, been fully

realized. Catholic countries have been comparatively unimproved, except where their condition has been changed by the influence of Protestantism in their vicinity.

These few remarks are, we presume, sufficient to show you the importance of moral effort at the crisis of a social revolution. But, if we mistake not, physical and intellectual changes very similar to those which characterized the Reformation, are, at this moment, going forward in the midst of us. It remains for the men of the present generation to say whether these changes shall receive a corresponding moral impression.

I. Important changes have of late taken place in the physical condition of man.

The natural wealth of every man, consists in his power to labour. This every man in a greater or less degree possesses. The less numerous class, in addition to the power to labour, possesses, also, a portion of capital. Hence, as labour becomes more valuable, every man becomes richer; that is, he is able to command a larger amount of objects, which may gratify his desires. But this change is principally in favour of the more numerous classes. *Capital*, the wealth of the rich man, remains stationary; whilst *labour*, the wealth of the poor man, rises in value. Thus the natural tendency of the progress of society, is to abolish poverty from the earth.

That labour is, in fact, becoming more valuable; that is, that it is better paid, is evident from a comparison of the condition of the labouring classes now, with their condition a few years since. Almost every man among us, may, if he will, command the means of very com-

fortable living. An industrious and virtuous artisan may provide for his family advantages, which, a few years since, were considered the attributes only of those above the level of mediocrity. The cause of this change may be easily stated. Labour is valuable to the employer in proportion to the amount of results that it will accomplish. Now it is well known, that, within the last fifty years, increased skill has rendered human labour vastly more productive than ever it was before. A greater amount of the product of his labour may, therefore, be reserved to the operative, whilst the capitalist receives at the same time a larger interest upon his investment.

It is interesting, also, to observe the manner in which this increased value has been given to human labour. In some cases, division of labour has enabled one man to do as much as could otherwise be done by two hundred. In other, and more numerous cases, a still more gratifying result has been produced, by the increased skill with which science has taught us to employ those qualities and relations with which the all-merciful God has seen fit to endow the universe around us. The most important of these, are the gravitating power of water, and the expansive force of steam. It is by a most beautiful adaptation of the former, that you, in this city, employ a little waterfall, without cessation, and almost without cost, to carry the means of cleanliness and health to every family within your borders. In various other parts of our country, you may behold a single individual, by means of machinery connected with a similar waterfall, executing, with the utmost perfection, what could not otherwise, in the same time, be performed by many hundreds.

But specially am I astonished at contemplating the results of steam, that new power which the last half century has placed within the control of man. Whether we consider the massiveness of its strength, or the facility of its adaptation, we are equally overwhelmed at the results which it promises to confer upon society. Probably half a million of men could not propel a boat two hundred miles with the speed given to it by a dozen workmen with a powerful engine. On the Liverpool and Manchester rail road, two men, with a locomotive engine, could easily do the work of a thousand, with a speed five or six times as great as human strength could, at its greatest effort, accomplish. Beside this, there can be but very little doubt, that steam will, at least in Great Britain, supersede the employment of brutes for draft labour; and thus enable the same extent of land to sustain more than double its present number of human beings. The same kind of result is in all cases produced, either by the introduction of valuable machinery, or by improvement in the means of internal or external communication. The instances which I have selected, are merely intended as specimens of a class of agents which Providence has within a few years taught us to employ, for the improvement of our condition. It ought also to be distinctly borne in mind, that probably only a very small number of the most important of these, has yet been discovered; and that, of those which have been discovered, the application is but yet in its infancy.—Sufficient, I trust, has been said to illustrate the obvious tendency of improvements in the arts, and to show how utterly incalculable are the benefits which they have evidently in reserve for us. The manner in which all

these changes affect the labouring classes, may be thus briefly stated. The comforts of living are procurable only by human labour. If then, by means of improvement in the arts, the labour of the human race is able to produce this year, twice as large an amount of the comforts of living, as was produced last year, then every man will have twice as much to enjoy. He will, therefore, be this year in circumstances as comfortable as those of a man of twice his wealth the year before. With the labour of last year he may earn twice the amount of comfort, or he may possess the former amount of comfort with half the amount of labour. A little reflection will, I think, teach any one, that these are precisely the results to which the movements of society are tending. It will, I think, also, be evident that the forces are similar to those exerted upon the condition of man, at the time of the Reformation, except that they affect more permanently, and to a greater degree, a much larger portion of the community.

The immediate effect of these changes upon the condition of the larger classes of society must be evident. They place within the power of every man a larger share of enjoyment, and a greater portion of leisure. They thus give to every man, not only more time for intellectual cultivation, but, also, the means for improving that time with increased advantage. And, if they do not render a man better educated himself, they render him sensible of his own deficiency, and awaken in him the desire, and furnish the means of gratifying it, of bestowing education upon his children. And hence, although the modes of education should undergo no improvement, there must result a more widely extended,

demand for mental improvement, and a more perfect and more powerful intellectual developement.

But secondly; the means for cultivating the human mind, are in a course of rapid improvement. Time will allow me only to allude to a very few considerations, connected with this branch of the subject.

1. The object of education is becoming better understood. It has, in many places, ceased to be considered enough to infuse into the pupil certain sentences, or even certain ideas, which sometime before had been infused into the instructor. It begins to be admitted, that education consists in so cultivating the mind, as to render it a more powerful, and more exact instrument for the acquisition, the propagation, and the discovery of truth, and a more certain guide for the regulation of conduct. Hence, it is now frequently conceded that education may be a science by itself, regulated by laws which require special study, and in the practical application of which, something more than the lowest degree of intelligence, may be at least convenient. A higher degree of talent will thus be called to this profession, in every one of its branches. Division of labour will produce the same beneficial results as in every other department of industry. And hence, as the object is better understood, as higher talent is engaged to promote it, and as that talent is employed under greater advantages, we may expect in the rising, and the succeeding generations, a more perfect mental developement than the world has any where yet seen.

Again; it has, within a few years, been discovered that education may be commenced much earlier in the life of a human being than was before considered practica-

ble. Who would have supposed, unless he had seen it, that any thing valuable could have been communicated to an infant of only two or three years old ? Specially, who would have supposed that the memory, the judgment, the understanding, and the conscience, of so young a child were already so perfectly formed and so susceptible of improvement ? It has thus been demonstrated that a very valuable education, an education which shall comprise instruction in the elements of many of the most important sciences, may be acquired, before a child is old enough to be profitably employed in muscular labour, and even while the care of it would be expensive to the parent. It has thus been made the interest of every one in the neighbourhood of an Infant School, to give his children, at least so much education as may be communicated there. And if I be not much mistaken, the instruction now given to infants, in these invaluable nurseries, is more philosophical, and does more towards establishing correct intellectual and moral habits, than was attainable, when I was a boy, by children of 12 or 14 years of age, in grammar schools of no contemptible estimation.

Allow me also to suggest an improvement which, though not yet in practice, must soon follow in the train of the others of which I have spoken. I allude to the application of the science of education to the teaching of the operative arts. At present a boy spends frequently seven years in acquiring a trade. His instructor, though a good practical artist, is wholly unacquainted with the business of teaching. Few persons will doubt that a man, who, with a knowledge of mechanical art, should devote himself exclusively to teaching it, might,

■ a few months, communicate as much skill as is now acquired in as many years. The result would be, in the end, far greater excellency of workmanship; and, what is still better, much more time for obtaining an education might be allowed to young men before they devoted themselves to the employments of life.

From these facts, the tendency of the present movements of society is obvious. It is, to furnish more leisure than formerly to the operative classes of society, to furnish them more extensively with the means of education, and to render that education better. They must, from the very nature of things, become both positively and relatively far richer, and much better informed, than they have ever been before. Now, as social power is in the ratio of intelligence and wealth ; the astonishing progress of the more numerous classes, in both these respects, must be producing more radical changes in the fabric of society than were witnessed even at the period of the Protestant Reformation.

But these changes are going forward with accelerated rapidity in our own country. With profuse liberality a bountiful Providence has scattered abundantly over our territory all the means for the rapid accumulation of wealth. Land, rich and unexhausted, adapted to the production of every article of luxury and convenience, stretches through every variety of climate. To peculiar natural advantages of internal communication, we add still greater capabilities of artificial improvement. The amount of our unappropriated water-power is incalculable ; and in regions where this is less abundant, inexhaustible beds of fuel offer every facility for the employment of that incomparable labourer, steam.

This country also, presents peculiar facilities for intellectual developement. The political institutions of other countries rather retard than accelerate the progress of mental cultivation. With us, the absence of all legalized hereditary barriers between the different classes of society, presents to every man a powerful inducement to improve himself, but especially his children, to the utmost. In other countries, the forms of government being unyielding, they do not readily accommodate themselves to a change in the relations of society. Ours are constructed with the express design of being modified, whenever a change in the relation of the social elements shall require it. The history of our country since the adoption of the federal constitution, has furnished abundant proof of the truth of these remarks. Every change in the form of the state governments, has been from a less to a more popular form. This at least shows, *first*, that the power is passing from the hands of the less numerous, to those of the more numerous classes of society ; and, *second*, that there is nothing in the nature of our institutions to prevent its thus passing. It is our duty to provide that it be wielded by intelligence and virtue.

I hope that sufficient has been said, to show that the period is rapidly advancing, when all, but especially the more numerous classes of society, will enjoy much more leisure for reflection, will be furnished with a vastly greater amount of knowledge, both of facts and of principles, and will be educated to use those facts and principles with far greater accuracy, and with far better success.

II. Let us proceed briefly to consider the encourage-

ments which these facts present, to an effort for the universal diffusion of Christianity.

1. The increase of wealth, and especially the consequent increase of leisure, among the more numerous classes, is in many respects greatly favourable to the progress of religion. Moderate labour invigorates—excessive labour enfeebles, the intellectual faculties. He, whose existence is measured by unbroken periods of either slavish toil, or profound sleep, soon sinks in passive subjection to the laws of his animal nature. Lighten his load, and his intellect regains its elasticity, he rises to the region of thought, breathes the atmosphere of reason, rejoices in the discovery of truth, and feels himself a denizen of the universe of mind.

Again. The progress of education is rendering the human understanding a more successful instrument for the investigation of the laws of nature, both in matter and in mind. Hence has the progress of discovery been so rapid during the last half century—and we believe that the work has but barely commenced. We apprehend that the boldest imagination has never yet conceived of the exactitude and the extent of that knowledge which we shall acquire of the qualities and relations of the universe around us; and of the skill to which we shall yet attain, of subjecting them all to the gratification of human want, and the alleviation of human wo. Now, we believe that God made this universe; that he created every particle of matter, and impressed upon it its various attributes. We believe that this same Being, also, created mind and inspired it with its moral and intellectual capacities, and we believe that the attributes of matter and the capacities of mind, are all formed to

harmonize with the moral laws contained in his holy oracles; so that in the end there shall not be found, throughout this wide universe, a straggling atom which does not yield up its illustration to the truth of revelation. Thus, to use the words of Foster, "Religion standing up in grand parallel with an infinite variety of things, receives from all their testimony and homage, and speaks a voice which is echoed by creation."

Thus far, every discovery of science and every invention in the arts, have uttered their voice in favour of the bible. Who can contemplate the relation of the various forces which move a steam engine, and the laws by which they operate, without seeing that all was devised, by Infinite wisdom, for just such a being, physical and intellectual, as man, to accomplish just such purposes as Infinite goodness had intended. Who can contemplate the social circumstances under which man enjoys the greatest amount of happiness, without being convinced that the very constitution of man requires obedience to precisely such precepts as are contained in the bible; that man is rewarded and punished on the principles which are there delineated; in other words, that the moral system of the bible is the moral system of the universe. A striking illustration of the truth of the general principle to which I refer, may be found in the history of political economy. This science has been, to say the least, most successfully cultivated by men who had no belief in the Christian religion. And yet, reasoning from unquestionable facts in the history of man, they have incontrovertibly proved that the precepts of Jesus Christ, in all their simplicity, point out the only rules of conduct, in obedience to which, either nations or indi-

viduals can become either rich or happy. So far as science has gone, then, every new truth in physics or in morals, has furnished a new argument for the authenticity of revelation. Thus will it be to the end. Philosophy herself will at last show the principles of the religion of Jesus Christ so legibly written on every thing else which the Creator's hand has formed, that it will be as impossible to deny the truth of the scriptures as the law of gravitation.

Besides, not only does the present state of society promise that vastly more of these laws will be known, and their moral connexions traced—it is also rendered evident that the knowledge of them will be more widely disseminated. Improvement in wealth, and in the science of education, will render what is now considered erudition, common to the humblest member of the community. Thus the facts, on which may be constructed the most incontestable arguments in favour of religion, will be found in abundance in the mind of every man. Thus the *media* of proof are multiplied without number. Though ignorance be the mother of superstition, knowledge is the parent of devotion. Take any man whose soul has neither been brutalized by animal indulgence, nor his judgment radically distorted by incurable prejudice; open his eyes upon the universe as it actually is, with all its at present undiscovered variety of incomparable contrivances, and tell me, could he ever afterwards be made an atheist? Or let him remark through the history of ages, the consequences resulting to individuals and nations, from different courses of moral conduct, and could he ever afterwards be persuaded that the Deity neither had made nor would enforce the dis-

tinction between virtue and vice? Or let him ask himself upon what principle, more than any other, it is necessary to act, if he would secure to himself any valuable result for the life that now is, and he will come to the conclusion, that in the things of this world, as well as of the other, success can only be expected from the exercise of faith. Nor is this all. A well regulated mind not only knows that it is so, but it is at every moment reminded of it. Every thing speaks to such a man of God, and God speaks to him in every thing.

Nor is this all. Not only does improved developement of the human faculties furnish new proofs of the truth of revelation—it also renders the mind more susceptible of their influence. It is the business of education to deliver us from the tyranny of prejudice and passion, and subject us to the government of reason. Mind thus becomes a more delicate, a more powerful, and a more certain instrument. It yields to nothing but evidence; before evidence it bows down in reverential homage. Thus, effect upon mind will at last be calculated upon with almost scientific precision. Now it is to this very training of the intellectual faculties that the progress of improvement in education promises to conduct mankind; so much more favourable is the mind of the hearer becoming, to the production of moral effect.

But we hope that this system of changes is not to be limited here. We believe that improvement in intellectual science, but above all, more elevated piety, and more ardent devotion, will yet confer some new powers of suasion on the Christian teacher. Every one must be sensible, that the gospel is an instrument which has never been wielded with its legitimate effect, since the

time of the Apostles. May we not hope that there are forms of illustration at present untried, that there are modes of appeal as yet unattempted, which, with an efficacy more certain than we any where now witness, will awaken the slumbering conscience, and lead the awakened sinner to the cross of Christ.

Christian Brethren, estimate, if you can, the importance of these facts. We have seen that every law of matter or of mind, presents a separate argument in favour of religion; that the providence of God is multiplying, with a rapidity beyond precedent, both the number and the power of such arguments; that all classes of men are becoming more deeply imbued with a knowledge of them, and that this knowledge, from the improved discipline of the faculties, must produce a more certain, and more salutary effect; and then consider how the press is enabling every man to exert his whole moral and intellectual power upon the thoughts and opinions of mankind, and you will surely say, that never have there been presented so many, nor so great encouragements, for a universal effort to bring the whole of christendom under subjection to Jesus Christ. The prediction seems already fulfilled, "the sons of strangers shall come bending unto thee." Following in the train of every art, and every science, infidel philosophy herself, is beheld presenting her offering at the feet of the Redeemer. Every thing waits for us to move forward and take possession of the inheritance which Messiah has purchased with his own most precious blood.

There are, however, a few circumstances of encouragement peculiar to the condition of this country, to which I may be permitted for a moment to advert.—

1. The proportion of truly religious persons, is greater with us than in any country in christendom. Perhaps it would not be too much to assert that their intelligence and opportunity of leisure are comparatively greater than fall to the lot of Christians in any other nation. I hope that it may, also, with truth be added, that notwithstanding the multiplicity of our sects, a greater degree of good fellowship, in promoting the eternal welfare of men, is discoverable here, than has been commonly witnessed, at least in the latter ages of the Christian church.

2. We enjoy perfect civil and religious freedom. Every man may originate as powerful trains of thought as he is able, may give them as wide a circulation as he will, and may use all other suitable means for giving them influence over the minds of others.

3. Public opinion is, as yet, more than usually friendly to religion. This land was first peopled by men who came here that they might enjoy "freedom to worship God;" and thus they proved themselves worthy of being the Fathers of an Empire. Our institutions, at their very commencement, received the impression of Christianity. The name, and the example, of the Puritans, are yet held in hallowed recollection. We are enjoying at this moment, the rich blessings purchased by their labours and their prayers. Our nation, wicked though it be, is not yet cursed with the sin of having deliberately rejected the offer of the gospel. Our soil is unstained with the blood of the saints. We may hope, then, that our eyes have not yet been smitten with avenging blindness. In carrying forward her conquests, we may then hope, that the church of God has

less opposition to encounter here, than she has met with elsewhere.

4. But it deserves specially to be remarked, that God has, in a peculiar manner, blessed the efforts that have been made in this country, to check the increase of vice, and promote the diffusion of piety. In illustration of this remark, I will not at present refer to the astonishing success which has attended the labours of the Bible, the Sabbath School, and the Tract Societies. I will only mention two facts, which, though not more important than those which I omit, allow of being presented with greater brevity. The first, is the effect which has been produced by the union of good men, for the promotion of temperance. I believe that but four years have elapsed since this benevolent effort commenced. Already has it saved from worse than mere destruction several millions of the national capital; it has reclaimed thousands of families, from what otherwise must have been inevitable ruin; it has taught hundreds of thousands successful resistance to perilous temptation; it is purifying the atmosphere, which so soon must have poisoned the rising generation, and its wide-spreading influence begins to be felt in every state and country, nay, I would hope, in every town throughout the union. Travellers from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, tell us that an amendment is universally perceptible. The records of various religious denominations, bear testimony to the same encouraging fact. We ourselves have witnessed that in stages, and in steam boats, in public houses, and in parlours, temperance is becoming more and more the habit of the people. The very traffic in ardent spirits is far

from being entirely reputable, and there is reason to hope, that in a few years more, this detestable leprosy may be banished from the land.

More especially, however, would I refer to the fact, that those seasons of special attention, in particular portions of the community, to the salvation of the soul, commonly denominated revivals of religion, and produced, as we believe, by the special influences of the Holy Spirit, have been multiplied among us, to a far greater degree than has ever before been known in any age or country. Almost every denomination, professing to be Christians, has, of late years, been greatly augmented in numbers, and strongly excited to religious effort, in consequence of such occurrences. Specially have these effects been visible among the young. Sabbath Schools, and Bible Classes, have, in a peculiar manner, been filled with that solemnity, which, turning the soul from the hot pursuit of pleasure and of sin, leads it to serious reflection, to unfeigned repentance, to faith in Jesus Christ, and to permanent and universal reformation. Now it matters not what theory we may adopt in respect to this subject. We are all willing to be influenced by facts. The fact then, we think, cannot be questioned, that events called revivals of religion, are becoming very common among us, and that where they occur most frequently, a larger portion of the people become active and zealous religionists; and if this be granted, it is sufficient for our argument.

Behold then, Christian Brethren, the encouragement before us. We are citizens of a country whose untrodden soil was moistened by the tears, and consecrated by the prayers of persecuted saints; whose earliest institu-

tions were formed under the auspices of the bible, where every man may pray as much, and live as holily, as he will ; where every man may circulate, as widely as he pleases, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and as eloquently as he is able, urge his fellow citizens to obey it ; and where God has been pleased to honour with his special benediction, every effort which has been made to arrest the progress of vice, and increase the influence of religion. What can we ask for more ? Why stand we here all the day idle ? We see how glorious a success has attended our present feeble and imperfect efforts. They have as yet been almost nothing in comparison with the ability of the Christian church in this country. How many of us have even approached the point of self-denial in effort, and surely it is only at this point that real benevolence begins. Let us estimate what is our solemn and unquestionable duty. Let us look at the wonderful blessing with which God has crowned our exertions, and I think we shall arrive at the conclusion, that with a corresponding degree of success upon such efforts, for the promotion of religion, as are palpably within our power, a revival of piety may be witnessed in every neighbourhood throughout the land ; the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ may be made to regulate the detail of individual and national intercourse ; the high praises of God may be heard from every habitation ; and perhaps before even the youth of the rising generation be gathered to their fathers, there may burst forth upon these highly favoured states, the light of the Millennial Glory. What is to prevent it ? Let any man reflect upon the subject and then answer. My brethren, I speak deliberately. I do believe that the option is put into

our hands.* It is for us to say whether the present religious movement shall be onward, until it terminate in the universal triumph of Messiah, or whether all shall go back again, and the generations to come after us suffer for ages the divine indignation, for our neglect of the gospel of the grace of God. The church has for two thousand years been praying, "Thy kingdom come." Jesus Christ is saying unto us, "it shall come, if you desire it."

Such, then, are some of the *encouragements* which the Providence of God presents for attempting the universal promulgation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Motives equally strong, may also be drawn from the results which must of necessity ensue, if we prove unworthy of the high destiny which is now set before us. To these, however, time will only allow me very briefly to allude.

In no case does God array himself in more avenging majesty, than when he resents the misimprovement of

* The author hopes that this remark, and those of a similar kind which may occur throughout the discourse, will not lead to the conclusion, that he entertains any unwarrantable notions on the subject of human agency. On this point, his opinions have long been fixed. He most confidently believes that all power, efficiency, real causation in the universe, is the work of God, and God alone; and that what is considered causation in man, is merely stated antecedency, yet a sort of stated antecedency which allows of wide range for motive, and to which all the language applied to it in the Holy Scriptures and elsewhere, is strictly appropriate, or suited to the nature of the thing. It seems, also, to him, too obvious for even remark, that the agency or causation of the creature, and of the Creator, are so essentially dissimilar, that there is really no danger of their interference with each other; and therefore, that urging a creature to labour a great deal, is — more likely to infringe upon the prerogative of the Creator, than urging him not to labour at all.

unusual blessings, or the neglect of signal opportunities for usefulness. "Curse ye Meroz," saith the angel of the Lord, "Curse ye bitterly, the inhabitants thereof—because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." "And when Jesus was come near, he beheld the city (Jerusalem,) and wept over it saying, *If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace—but now they are hidden from thine eyes*—for the days come in which thine enemies shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and shall not leave thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the *time of thy visitation.*"

The spirit of these warnings, applies with emphatic force to the church at the present day. With regard to society at large, it is evident that the changes which have commenced, must either result in the universal diffusion of the principles of religious knowledge and civil liberty, or in the establishment of a more firmly rivetted system of slavery, than the world hath yet beheld. The philosophy of Christianity is now generally well understood. Her points of contact with the human heart, are discovered. So far as human sagacity can discover it, the secret of her great strength is revealed. Her enemies are rallying, and mean to regain the ground, which they lost at the Reformation. Their resources are immense, and their wisdom has been gained in that best of all schools, the school of reverses. Combining all their forces, and, with skill worthy of a better cause, adapting their weapons to the present state of society, they are preparing for one mighty, one universal onset. Christianity cannot long maintain her present position. De-

lay will be defeat. She must instantly seize the vantage ground, and march onward, universally triumphant, or be driven again for ages to the dens and caves of the earth. Which shall she do? This question, it remains for the men of the present generation to answer.

The period within which this question must be decided, may, in other countries, be prolonged; not so, however, in this country. Other governments may be kept stable amid political commotion, by balancing the interests and passions of one class of the community against those of another. With us, there is but one class—the people. Hence, our institutions can only be supported while the people are restrained by moral principle. We have provided no checks to the turbulence of passion: we have raised no barriers against the encroachments of a tyrannical majority. Hence, the very forms which we so much admire, are at any moment liable to become an intolerable nuisance, the instruments of ultimate and remediless oppression. Now, I do not know that history furnishes us with reason to believe that man can be brought under subjection to moral government, in any other way than by the inculcation of principles, such as are delivered in the New Testament. You see then, that the church of Christ is the only hope of our country.

I will not here ask, whether any thing has ever transpired within your recollection, in the history of our republic, at which a thoughtful man may tremble. I will not ask, whether, when the most momentous questions are at stake, it be customary to address the passions, or the reason and conscience of our fellow citizens. I will neither ask, whether he would not be considered a

novice, who was credulous enough to believe a politician honest, nor whether an utter disregard of truth be not avowed without a blush, as the principle on which are conducted many of the presses, which politicians support. I will not ask, whether the most infamous want of principle, hath always obstructed the advancement of him, who hath made his yell heard in the deafening clamour of electioneering strife. Nor will I ask, whether there be not men deeply learned in the history of human affairs, who, overlooking the moral power that resides in the religion of Jesus Christ, have not already doubted whether such institutions as ours, can long be perpetuated. I refer to these things, Christian brethren, to remind you how inevitable is the result, if it be not arrested by the redeeming influences of Christianity. It is time you were aware of the fact, that even now, not a moment is to be lost. When the statesman trembles for the republic, then it is time for the Christian to act.

You see, then, that unless prevented by the diffusion of religious principle, the wreck of our civil liberties is inevitable. But in the present state of society, civil and religious liberty must perish together. Then must ensue ages of darkness, more appalling than aught which this world in the gloomiest periods of her history hath yet recorded. What form of misery will brood over this now happy land—I pretend not to foresee. I cannot tell, whether these solemn temples will become the resort of muttering monks, or of infidel bacchanalians. I know not, whether our children will worship a relic, and pray to a saint—or deny the existence of God, and proclaim that death is an eternal sleep. I should rather

fear, that neither of these woes would fill up the measure of our cup of trembling; but that some strange ministration of wrath more terrific than eye hath seen, or ear heard, or the heart of man conceived, was yet treasured up among the hidden things of the Almighty, to be exhausted in vengeance upon the iniquities of a people, who so signally knew not the day of their merciful visitation.

Fathers and Brethren! You behold the result to which we have been led. It is for us to decide whether the moral light, which has just begun to dawn, shall ascend to meridian glory; or whether for ages it shall be extinguished in darkness. It is for us to say, whether this nation shall first welcome the coming of Messiah, and rejoice in the earliest subjection to his reign; or bear for ages the awful weight of divine indignation, for having, under such aggravated circumstances, rejected the offered mercy of God's well beloved Son.

Men, Brethren, and Fathers—what shall we do? Shall the kingdom of Christ come, or shall it not come?

But before you answer this question, it is proper that I inform you what the answer involves.

The kingdom of Christ will not come, unless an effort be made on the part of the church, more intense and more universal, than any which later ages have seen. Little doth it become me to speak in the language of a reformer. Yet you will, I trust, pardon me, if I, with diffidence, suggest some changes which must take place before we can be prepared for the crisis before us.

In general, then, I would remark, that the providence of God calls loudly upon religious men, to be more deeply and thoroughly religious.

Too commonly now, the character of religionist is merged in the character of statesman, or lawyer, or physician, or merchant, or tradesman, or even of man or woman of fashion. I blush while I speak of it, but it is true; this age beholds fashionable disciples of a *crucified Jesus*. All this must, we think, be altered. If religion be any thing, it is every thing. If the bible be not a fable, it is meet that every other distinction of a Christian be merged, in that of religionist. Our private history, the arrangements of our business, the discipline of our families, our intercourse with society, must show that we do really care very little about every thing else, if we can only promote the growth of vital piety in our own souls, and in the souls of those around us.

But to be somewhat more particular. New efforts are required of ministers of the gospel. The times seem to demand that our lives be much more laborious than formerly. We must labour more abundantly in preparation for the pulpit; we must preach more in season, and out of season; we must visit our people more frequently, and more religiously; we must exhort more fervently; and thus make our moral influence more universally, and more deeply felt upon all classes, but specially upon the young. If it be said, that clergymen are, generally, as laborious as their health will admit, we may grant it; but still, we would ask, might they not frequently obtain better health? Every one of us, surely, might understand and obey the laws of his animal economy. If we would do this, then we should less frequently complain of ill health. Besides, who of us, with the firmest health, has ever accomplished half the labour of Baxter, or Payson, who were invalids through life?

It will be necessary that our efforts be more systematic. We act so much at random, that the labours of one day interfere with those of another, and thus much invaluable time is lost. Who that has had the least experience in the ministry, does not see to how much better purpose he would have lived, had he resolutely set about doing one thing at a time, and doing that thing thoroughly. Should every one of us survey the field which God has placed before him, and begin now to direct those influences, which, ten years hence, will be called into operation; and should we thus labour year after year upon the best plan that prayerful consideration will enable us to devise—would not our lives be spent to vastly better effect?

Again. The approaching crisis will demand a greater amount of intellectual vigour. The work will call for strong arms—and for very many of them. Ministers will find it necessary to devote themselves, more exclusively, to severe studies, to original thinking, and to every sort of discipline which may render the mind a more efficient instrument for swaying the opinions of men. Perhaps it will not be amiss to add, that the present state of society seems specially to demand of us, a more profound acquaintance with the evidences of revelation; of the various connexions which God has established between moral laws, and the laws of the universe about us; and a deep and intimate acquaintance with the unadulterated oracles of divine truth, if possible, in the languages in which they were originally written.

But more than any thing else, do we need improvement in personal piety, in the experience of religion in

our own souls. We must approach nearer to the luminary, if we would reflect more of its light. Nothing but ardent love to God, and unshaken trust in his promises, will animate us amid the labours to which the necessities of the church will call us. In the absence of these, we have no reason to expect that the influences of the Holy Spirit will attend upon our efforts, without which, they would be as unable to excite a holy volition, as to create a world. When ministers of Christ thus labour for Christ, thus love Him, and thus trust in Him—then may we hope to see the blessings of the day of Pentecost descend upon our American churches.

But the principles which apply to a minister, apply, also, to every Christian man. I add, then, secondly, the necessities of the church require new efforts of laymen. A religious man, every where, and at all times, must be a religionist.

It is necessary that Christians begin to use their property as stewards. The principles of the gospel must be carried into the business of our every day expenditure. We must sacrifice to Christ our love of pleasure, of ostentation, and of accumulation—or we must cease to pray “Thy kingdom come.” I see men professing godliness, spending their property profusely, in obedience to all the calls of a world that knows not God; or else hoarding it up, with miserly avarice, to ruin the souls of the rising generation; but I confess, I do not see how they will answer for it “to the Judge of quick and dead.”

2. The cause of Christ, requires of laymen a far greater amount of personal exertion. Suppose ye, that in apostolic times, the claims of religion would have re-

quired of a disciple, nothing more than a small portion of his income. No; when the time was come for the church to be enlarged, they that were scattered abroad, went every where, preaching the word. Now we do not say, that you are required to be preachers; but we do say, that religion requires you to consider the promotion of piety in the hearts of men of more importance than any thing else. The management of the religious charities of the day belongs to you. It is now done principally by the clergy. Its tendency is to render them secular. It makes them men of executive energy, rather than of deep thought, and commanding eloquence. The cause would gain much by a division of labour. Brethren, you are called upon to come forward and relieve us from this service. But yet more—every man who knows the value of the soul, may speak of its value to his neighbour. Any man of ordinary abilities, who feels the love of Christ, may give profitable religious instruction to youth and children. The promotion of piety, in the hearts of others, should enter as much into every man's daily arrangements, as the care for the body, that perisheth. When this spirit shall have become universal—something will be done.

Do you say, that you have not the requisite information? I ask, does it require much information, to remind men that they are going to the judgment seat of Christ? But I say again, why have you not information? That intellect is by far the most valuable, as well as the most improvable possession, with which God has entrusted you—why have you not rendered it a better instrument, to serve Him? Every Christian, in such a country as this, ought to be a well-informed man.

And lastly, as I said before, the cause of Christ requires of private Christians, as well as of clergymen, deeper humility, more fervent piety, and a life of closer communion with God. Your money and labours, as well as our studies and preaching, will be despised, unless they be the offering of holy hearts. All, all, are utterly valueless, unless the Spirit descend upon us from on high. Our alms will be as water spilled upon the ground, unless our souls are inflamed with the love of Christ, and our hearts temples for the residence of the Holy Ghost.

You see then, what is required of us. I ask again, Christian brethren, are you ready for the effort? Shall the kingdom of Christ come, or shall it not come? You have seen the option which the providence of God has set before us. You have seen, so far as ourselves are concerned, on what that option is suspended. What will you do? I put the question to the understanding, and the conscience of every man. Do you not believe that by such an effort as I have suggested, the liberties of this country may be secured—and that, without it, there is every reason to fear they will be irrecoverably lost? Do you not believe, that, by such an effort, thousands of souls will be saved from eternal perdition—and that, without it, those souls will not be saved? Do you not believe, that, if such an effort were made in entire dependence on the Spirit of God, this country would be subjected to Jesus Christ—that his kingdom would come, and his will be done throughout our land—and that, if it be not made, there is every reason to fear, that His kingdom will not come for ages? Do not you believe, that there is not a moment to be lost—but that every

thing depends upon the men of the present generation? You are then in possession of all the facts necessary to a decision. You stand in the presence of him who died to redeem a world lying in wickedness, and at whose bar you must meet, again, the resolution of the present moment. In the presence of that Saviour, redeemed sinners—what will ye do?

Time will barely suffer me to allude, in the briefest manner, to that species of religious effort which has given occasion to this address. You cannot, however, have failed to observe, that if ever the gospel is universally to prevail, it is by some such means as this, under God, that its triumph will be achieved. By furnishing employment for talent of every description, it multiplies, almost indefinitely, the amount of benevolent effort, and awakens throughout every class of society the dormant spirit of Christian philanthropy. It renders every teacher a student of the bible; and thus, in the most interesting manner, brings divine truth into immediate contact with the understanding and the conscience. All this it does to the teacher. But, beside all this, the Sabbath School is imbuing what will, twenty years hence, be the active population of this country, with the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is teaching that class of the community, into whose hands so soon the destinies of this country will fall, the precepts of inviolable justice, and eternal truth. But more than all, it is implanting in the bosoms of millions of immortal souls, "that knowledge which is able to make them wise unto salvation, through the faith that is in Christ Jesus." How transcendently glorious are the privileges before us! Who will not embark in this holy enterprise?

One remark more, and I have done. I behold before me, the congregated wisdom of a most illustrious branch of the Christian church.* We are assembled in the midst of a city, renowned throughout the world for its deeds of mercy. The effects of our decisions may be felt in the remotest hamlet in the land. To us is offered the high honour of commencing this work, in a manner that shall give the cheering promise of its successful completion; and of awakening this new world to welcome the first beams of the Sun of righteousness.

Men, Brethren, and Fathers! Suffer me, in the name of the omniscient Saviour, to ask, what will you do? Let every minister of the cross, here ask himself, why, even during my own life time, should not the millennium commence in my congregation? Here then, on the altar of God, let us offer ourselves up anew, and in the strength of Christ resolve that we will henceforward live with direct reference to the immediate coming of his kingdom. Professional men, before you rest to-night, will ye dedicate that intellect, with which God has endowed you, with all the means of influence which it can command, to the service of your Redeemer? Men of wealth, as ye retire from this place, will ye collect the title deeds of that property, which Providence hath lent you, and write upon them all, "Holiness to the Lord?" A thousand times have we said that we would do all this. Let the Spirit witness with our spirits, that we do it now in view of the judgment seat of Christ. Christian men and women, in the Sabbath School, in the Bible Class,

* The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, — then in session in Philadelphia.

and in the use of all the means which God has placed in our power, let us labour to bring this world into immediate subjection to the Redeemer—or let us cease to pray “Thy kingdom come.” May God enable us to act worthily; and to his name shall be the glory in Christ. *Amen.*

THE WAY

TO

BLESS AND SAVE OUR COUNTRY:

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN PHILADELPHIA, AT THE REQUEST OF THE
AMERICAN SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION,

MAY 23, 1831.

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AMERICAN SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION.

PHILADELPHIA:

■ 146 ■

THE

WAY TO BLESS AND SAVE OUR COUNTRY.

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”—Proverbs xxii. 6.

HARDLY any thing, I believe, is more difficult, than to incorporate the conviction with our settled habits of thinking and acting, that the most common and familiar truths are often the most important. They are like household faces and voices, which strike us the less, for having been with us from our childhood. It costs us an effort to enter into the spirit of trite proverbs and every-day quotations from any writer, however fraught with wisdom, either human or divine. To say, for the thousandth time—

“ ’Tis education forms the common mind,
Just as the twig is bent the tree ’s inclined,”

is to compress volumes into a single couplet; and is no less true than it was when the felicitous comparison first occurred to the poet’s mind; and yet, how threadbare and uninteresting has it become. How few, of all the thousands who receive its indelible stamp in the nursery, ever stop to think of its mighty practical import.

Thus it is, I apprehend, with that divine aphorism which I have chosen for my text, *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* What words were ever more fitly spoken by mortal lips; and yet have these “apples of gold in pictures of silver,” so long been familiar to our eyes, that we little think of their intrinsic and inestimable value. Can we spend the present

hour more profitably, than in subjecting them to a minute and careful examination?

As every science and course of instruction depends, essentially, upon a few elementary principles, and that of Christian education as much as any other, so a familiar acquaintance with these principles is essential. Before we undertake to teach, it is extremely important that we understand the primary laws of thought and feeling; and that we have an intimate acquaintance with the elements which we are to arrange and combine, so as to strengthen every faculty, and to secure the most perfect developement of symmetry and beauty. And, whatever our ultimate object may be, we must begin at the beginning. We must commence with the simplest combinations, either of characters, substances, thoughts, or affections. This holds true, whether we would construct the most ordinary machine, or measure the height and magnitude of the stars;—whether we would unlock the stores of literature in a foreign language, or fathom the deepest and sweetest wells of our own;—whether, in short, we would, in any way, concentrate and direct the mighty energies either of matter, or of mind. He who should wait for his son to understand Paradise Lost, before he would teach him the first lesson in two letters; or, who should attempt to bend an oak of fifty circles, would be about as wise, and about as successful, as the parent who should wholly neglect the religious instruction of his children in their tender years, and then undertake to change their habits, and mend their hearts, in the strong maturity of passion and appetite. We must begin the work early, or we shall “labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought and in vain.”

The elements of things never change. The laws both of matter and mind are immutable. What they were three thousand years ago, they were yesterday, and always will be. The same intellectual and moral cultivation which was needful then, is required now. The same motion which swayed the

reason and the conscience before the Christian era, or before the flood, would, in like circumstances, sway it still. And the same course of instruction and discipline which formed a good moral and religious character in the time of Solomon, would produce similar results at any other time. If it was then true, that children trained up in the right way, would not depart from it, it is still true, and will be in every coming age. For the young mind and the young heart are every where alike. Children are just what they always have been. They have the same constitution ; the same physical, intellectual, and moral susceptibilities ; the same bias to evil ; the same plastic nature ; and they may, by the blessing of God, on early and pious training, be moulded into the same virtuous habits.

And what is true of one child, at any given time, is true of a thousand, or a million. The meaning of the text, obviously, is not, train up *this* child, or *that* child, but train up *any* child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Here and there a mournful exception there possibly may be. One child in an age, or a country, thus piously educated, might possibly bring down a father's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave ; but if the earth should consent to bear one such reprobate upon a thousand leagues of its surface, the general rule would not be affected.

It becomes extremely interesting, therefore, to inquire,
What it is to train up a child in the way he should go ?

How it is that such training forms a permanently virtuous and pious character ? And,

How the whole youthful population of our country may be thus piously educated ?

I. What is it to train up a child in the way he should go ? Here a few preliminary observations will, if I mistake not, lead to a clear and satisfactory answer. The elements, or first principles of education, and indeed of all science, and

all things, are extremely simple. We know, for example that the sublime, and almost incredible discoveries of modern astronomy, are based upon numbers, lines, and angles, which are familiar to a little child. How few and simple, too, are the substances which constitute this great globe, with all its solid ground and restless waters; its smothered fires and teeming population! The philosophy of mind, so wonderful, so illimitable, so godlike—what are its elements but the simplest thoughts and perceptions imaginable! And the science of morals, reaching, as it does, from earth to heaven, from the lowly cottage up to the “throne of God and the Lamb,” on what does it rest, but the simple principle of love!

One of the most striking characteristics of the present age is *simplification*. Almost all our improvements in mechanics, in the arts, in the use of natural agents, and in the science of education, consist in the discovery and application of more simple principles than had before been observed. Hardly a month passes without some new invention, or discovery, by which power is gained, or dispensed with; and by which human labour is rendered at once more perfect, and more productive. And who can look at these great benevolent institutions, which are the glory of the present age, without being struck with the simplicity of their principles; with the unparalleled extent and efficiency of their operations? How much more is done to enlighten and save mankind, than the world ever dreamed of, till the current century, and with how little comparative cost. It is sufficient, here, just to name the American Bible Society, the American Tract Society, and the American Sunday School Union, which now holds its seventh and brightest anniversary. Who would have believed, thirty years ago, that so many denominations of Christians could ever be brought to meet on common ground, in any such great Society; or that so many millions of people could be furnished with the means of improvement in knowledge and piety, with so much ease, and so little

expence? Verily, "it is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

But while we speak of these and other astonishing improvements, in so many departments of Christian benevolence, let us not credit ourselves with inventions which are as old as the Bible itself. A little reflection will be sufficient to convince any man, that we have discovered no new principle in morals, or religion—in the spread of the gospel, or in Christian education. In all our plans for doing good, we are only approximating to the divine simplicity of that perfect compend, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." Our Foreign and Home Missionary Societies, what are they doing, but in simple obedience to the command, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature? All our Bible and Tract Societies, what are they employed about, but just scattering abroad those leaves of the tree of life, "which are for the healing of the nations?" And this great and prosperous Union, what is it doing, what can it ever do more than is implied in these few monosyllables, *Train up a child in the way he should go?* As there never was a more simple plan thought of for renovating the world, so none could be more comprehensive, or effectual. Let it once be thoroughly tried, in any state or nation, with a humble reliance on the grace of God; that is, let every child be trained up from infancy in the right way, and how wonderful would be the moral transformation in the space of forty years! Let the same thing be done every where, and how soon would there be "new heavens and a new earth?"

What then is it to train up a child in the way he should go? The general import of the term is perfectly obvious. To *train*, is to draw from act to act, by a skilful influence—to form to any practice by exercise—to invite, allure, educate, bring up; or, as it is in the margin of the text, to

catechise. Thus, a young horse, or bullock, is *trained*, when he is gradually brought under subjection to his master, or when he is made docile, trusty, and useful. A soldier is *trained* for active service, when he is taught the art of war by an experienced officer, and is by degrees inured to hardships and dangers.

A child is *trained*, when, instead of being left to grow up in ignorance, and follow his own inclinations, he is brought under the influence of instruction and persuasion; of mental and moral discipline. And he is trained up in the *way he should go*, when he receives a pious education, commencing with the dawn of intellect, and continued till his character is formed and settled;—when his wayward propensities are watched and checked in their earliest manifestations;—when his opening mind is carefully imbued with moral and religious truth;—when his conscience is exercised to a quick discernment of right and wrong;—when his heart is made habitually to feel the presence of high and holy motives;—when the budding of every kindly affection is cherished by the breath of prayer; and when, in fine, virtuous habits of thought, of feeling, and of action, are gradually consolidated into great and abiding moral principles.

If the process is not begun early; if any one thing is neglected; if the parent, or other religious teacher, is incompetent, or unfaithful; if the system of religious education is not carried out; if, in religion, any aliment but the “sincere milk of the word,” is offered and received; and if the best instructions are counteracted by bad examples in the family, or in the school, then the child is not trained up in the *way he should go*. He may be taught to read ever so early; he may be put under the tuition of the ablest masters, in every branch of science and literature; he may outstrip all his companions in mental discipline and attainments; he may, in a popular sense, receive a finished education, and yet not be educated at all in the sense of my text. “The fear of

the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Whatever other advantages any child may enjoy, it is only when he is treated as a moral and accountable being ; it is only when the truths of the Bible are laid at the foundation of all his attainments ; it is only when he is taught "to fear God and keep his commandments," that he is trained up in the way he should go. It is a thorough Christian education alone, which can secure our children from vice and ruin ; which can guide their feet in "the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace." But,

II. How is it that such an education forms ■ permanently virtuous and pious character ? There is something in the power of habit, over all our faculties, whether bodily, intellectual, or moral, which I do not pretend to comprehend, and which I shall not therefore attempt to explain. The facts in the case are undeniable. Nothing is better settled than that the frequent repetition of any physical art, or mental process, begets an aptitude for the same thing, which it is extremely difficult to overcome. The unconquerable despotism of bad habits is proverbial. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." The same is true of good and virtuous habits, though not in so high ■ degree. I am far from believing, that there are any blank leaves in the book of human nature, even at the beginning of it. Many a dark and crooked line appears upon the opening of the very first page. But still there is room to write the law of God upon it, and by the use of proper means, the law of sin may be gradually obliterated. What I mean to say is this. God has so made us, such is the constitution of the human mind, (notwithstanding the terrible blot of innate depravity, which nothing but his Spirit can ever wipe out,) that, under suitable instruction, a virtuous character may be formed, which will stand the shock, at least of ordinary temptations. This is what I call the *natural* effect of right training upon the mind ; and in this view of the subject, I am borne out by

■ great many striking analogies. The world is full of them. While the clay is soft, you can mould it into what form you choose. You bend the sapling of a year's growth with perfect ease; and in becoming a great tree, it most obediently follows the direction which your finger gave it half a century ago. Wherever a stream first begins to flow, there it cuts a channel for itself, and there it is likely to flow for ever. And so it is with the infant mind. First impressions are deep and permanent. Every early bias has a prodigious influence upon the future character. When these biases are in a right direction, they grow and ripen into good habits; and the man thenceforth travels on in the path of rectitude and happiness.

But while I lay so much stress upon the *natural* force of a religious education, I am fully aware, that this can never be our chief reliance. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." It is so in our children at the tenderest age. "They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." The most pious education can never reconcile them to God. It is the Holy Spirit, alone, which can "put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." This is the only perfect security. Now, whether every child in the land would be savingly converted, if all were trained up in the right way, I do not certainly know; but I feel quite sure, that nobody can prove the contrary. Is it too much to affirm that the experiment of what, by the blessing of God, might be accomplished in this way, has never yet been tried, even upon a small scale? How many children in the world, think ye, have ever yet received as good a Christian education as it is possible to give? What if your children, or mine, have grown up under our care without being born again? What does this prove, but our own unfaithfulness? Is God slack concerning his promises? Is not the time coming, when all shall know him from the least to the greatest? And who can tell, but that during the millennium, every child will be converted, either in its mother's arms, or in the Sabbath-school.

But however this may be, no one who believes the word of God, or gives any heed to the testimony of experience and observation, will question the vast importance of early religious instruction. An insatiable and prying curiosity may exhaust itself in trying to explain *how* it is, that early training produces such mighty results; and "some man" may, if he chooses, declare that he will never believe what he cannot comprehend: but with the text and the facts before us, the path of duty is perfectly plain. We are just as much bound and encouraged to co-operate in promoting the great cause of Christian education, as if we could see every secret step of the process by which virtuous and pious habits are formed. We come now to inquire,

III. How, or by what means the whole youthful population of our country, may be trained up in the way they should go? Is such a thing practicable? Is it not too much for Christian philanthropy, with all her wealth, and all her influence, and all her faith, and all her holy yearnings, to attempt, or hope for? Certainly it is not too much. "All things are possible to him that believeth." There is obviously one way in which the blessings of religious education *might* be extended to every family in the United States, without the least difficulty, were the natural guardians of the young qualified for the responsible and endearing relations which they sustain. It undoubtedly devolves upon parents, first and chiefly, to train up their children in the way they should go; to begin the work at early dawn, and to carry it forward with many prayers, till "Christ be formed in them the hope of glory." Were fathers and mothers all enlightened and devoted Christians, (as they ought to be,) no child would be neglected. Under the cultivation which this universal piety would ensure, a transforming power would operate silently, but mightily, upon all the young millions of our country's hopes. Even then, "helps" might, no doubt, be highly useful. Parents might need assistance in carrying forward to

maturity the best systems of religious education. Many certainly would.

But how much more is foreign aid called for, in the existing state of things. What an awful dearth of piety is there, at the head of more than a million and ■ half of American families! From this quarter, then, ■ religious influence upon all who are now coming forward into life, with the destinies of the nation in their hands, is hopeless. Not one third part of them will ever be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, by those who gave them life. Must they then be left to grow up in ignorance and sin, and to pull down the pillars of the state upon their devoted heads? You promptly answer, No. Instant, and loud voices, from every quarter of this great and prosperous city, answer, No! All the managers, and auxiliaries, and agents, and depositories, and friends of this heaven-born Union, answer, *No!* All the Sabbath-school libraries in the land, and more than sixty thousand teachers, answer, no! And soon will the whole American Church, with a voice like the sound of many waters, answer, NO!

Here, in this blessed Union of hearts and hands, of counsels and prayers—in this flowing together of the waters of life from so many different sanctuaries, I see a pledge that every child in the city and the country, on the sea-board and by the great rivers of the west, shall be sought out, and have the opportunity of being instructed “in the right way of the Lord.” Did the time permit, and were it necessary, I might here trace the history of this blessed institution, from its precarious infancy to the lifting up of its head among the stars. I might speak of its early struggles, and the recent triumphs of its faith and its works—of the destitute regions which it has explored—of the thrilling appeals which have gone forth from the fulness of its heart—of the four hundred and fifty thousand children now in its schools—of the vast multitude of books which it has published—of the incalcul-

lable amount of good which it has already accomplished, and of its noble resolution, at the last anniversary, *to supply the Valley of the Mississippi with Sabbath-schools in two years.*

But it as little needs the eulogy as the defence of my feeble voice. It has excited the admiration, and kindled the eloquence of the statesman, as well as the divine. Mightier voices never thundered in our National Capitol, than have spoken its praises. Wherever its name is mentioned, the distinctions of party and sect are at once forgotten ; and on ■ memorable, recent occasion, we have seen “the north give up, while the south kept not back.” And then it was that the wrestling of the giants gave place to exalted moral reasonings, and mutual congratulations. But what is more than all, the character and deeds of this blessed Union are “written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.” Its record is on high. Its all-comprehensive and sweet benevolence is reflected from nearly half a million of happy faces every Sabbath day, and gratefully acknowledged by as many tongues. What it needs, is not the approving testimony of a humble individual, from the place which I now occupy, but the zealous co-operation of all the friends of religion, and of our free institutions ; and above all, the continued smiles of Heaven upon its counsels and its labours.

I shall therefore just glance at the principles of the Union ; its admirable adaptation to the religious wants of our country, and the genius of our government ; and then press the duty of sustaining it, and of extending its operations upon every class of American citizens. It is the glory of this institution, that it belongs to no religious party, or sect. Here all minor differences of opinion are merged in the acknowledged principles of a common faith, and yet so as to leave each denomination at full liberty to inculcate its distinctive views upon all the children of its connection. Thus while

each tribe in our Israel retains its own standard, all the tribes are represented in the blended studding of one common breastplate; and all move on together under His banner, " who was with the church in the wilderness." The objects of the Union, as expressed in the first article of the Constitution, are, " To concentrate the efforts of Sabbath-school societies in different sections of our country—to strengthen the hands of the friends of religious instruction on the Lord's day—to disseminate useful information; circulate moral and religious publications in every part of the land; and to endeavour to plant a Sunday-school wherever there is a population." These objects are worthy of that enlightened benevolence which founded this noble institution, and cannot fail of securing the approbation of every Christian, and every patriot. The obvious design of the system is, to pre-occupy the infant mind, throughout this great republic, with the principles of virtue and piety—to sow the good seed, and keep out the tares—to teach all the rising millions of a mighty empire, as they come up successively into life, their relations to God, their high duties, and their immortal destiny. It is, to enlighten the understanding and educate the heart—to make virtuous and happy families and neighbourhoods—to make good men and good citizens—good rulers—good and loyal subjects of the king of heaven; and, as a matter of course, good and peaceable subjects of a republican government. The design of the American Sunday-School Union is, to send abroad a moral power which shall quench all the remaining fires of intemperance, and lock up every gaming-house, and theatre, and brothel; and transform the whole army of drunkards and paupers into useful and independent members of society. It is, as soon as possible, to tear up every criminal docket, and stop all profane swearing, slander, and cheating. It is, to rescue the Sabbath from every kind of profanation, and to inculcate upon the young, every truth, and every duty that is found in the

Bible. The grand design of this institution, in short, is, to empty the prisons and fill the churches; to expel misery and crime in every form from the land ; to spread pure and undefiled religion over all the east, and west, and north, and south ; and to train up our whole population for the kingdom of heaven. Such is the undisguised, the godlike design of the American Sunday School Union.

And need I stop to show how admirably, how perfectly, it is adapted to the wants of our country, and the character of our free institutions ? Whose soul does not kindle within him, when he thinks of what has already been done by this institution, and of what it is now doing in every corner of the land :—How it seeks out the poor and the ignorant, and by bringing them together every week within the Sabbath-school, with children of better circumstances, introduces them into a new world of thought, and feeling, and moral influence. How it everywhere offers to adopt the fatherless, and to assist the widow in training up her family for usefulness, and for glory. How its instructions “ drop as the rain, and distil as the dew ; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.” How like an angel of mercy, it visits where the Bible is scarcely known, and no morning or evening sacrifice goes up, and no pious counsel ever flows from parental lips ; and how it allures the little strangers to God whom it finds in these abodes of moral death, and turns their feet into the path of life.

Now, is any thing wanting, but just to extend the blessings of this divine charity, and establish an efficient Sabbath-school wherever there are children to be trained up in the way they should go ? Would not the other means of grace and salvation follow almost of course ? The Bible would certainly be there ; nor would it be in the power of the prince of darkness himself to keep out the heralds of the cross. No village, or scattered settlement, that is once brought under the heavenly influence of faithful Sabbath-school

instruction, will ever consent to live without a preached gospel.

Need I speak of the cheapness of this system of religious education? When once fairly introduced, how trifling is the expence. Who, of all the sixty thousand teachers now employed, desires, or would consent to receive any pecuniary compensation? Which of them does not reap a rich reward in his own improvement, and in the pleasure of doing good? Never was so much labour performed so cheerfully, so faithfully, and so productively, for nothing. The contingent expences of so great an institution must indeed be large. So vast a territory as ours cannot be explored and organized but by the employment of many agents; and Sabbath-school libraries cost something. But who, in the last age, would have believed it possible to purchase as much entertaining and useful reading for an hundred dollars, as can now be had for thirty? I confess that I am astonished when I look into your depository, and ask the prices of your publications. That congregation, or settlement, must be poor indeed, which cannot afford to procure a handsome library.

Of the happy adaptation of this wonder-working system to the genius of our free institutions, but little need be said. It must strike the eye and the heart of every enlightened patriot, at a glance. Our government is not a government of force, but of influence. Its only sure basis is the virtue and piety of the people. In the absence of these, should Heaven in its wrath ever visit us with so dark a day, it must inevitably fall. When it is gone, you may plant the soil on which it stood with swords and bayonets; you may compel a degenerate race to cringe at the foot of a throne; and you may proudly construct the monuments of national servitude, with cannon upon the battle field; but without the living principle of moral rectitude, in the mass of the people, no country can long be free and happy.

Now, the American Sunday School Union offers to provide

the very security which is wanted, by carrying the blessings of religious education into every family ; by planting the seeds of piety in every tender mind ; by extending its adoption to every abode of moral orphanage ; and by giving its pledge, that, with God's blessing, the whole rising intellect and heart of our country shall be taught to fear God, and keep his commandments. This is what the wisest and best of our statesmen, ■ well as ministers of the gospel, propose to do. Here are Moses and Aaron united in counsel and in labour, for the common good. Here is the true American union, of which no Christian, and no patriot can ever be ashamed. It is the glory and safety of our country. It is an union which gives its money, gives its time, gives its influence ; and strives, in its daily prayers, to raise up good Christians and good ministers—good citizens and good rulers. It is such an union ■ was witnessed when Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses in the battle. An union of intelligence, public spirit, and deep moral principle, in all the members of the community, which effectually secures a conscientious obedience to the laws. That sort of union which makes every patriot a Christian, and every Christian a patriot. That union, in fine, which exists where all the members of ■ great family “ love one another with a pure heart, fervently.”

This, I hardly need to say, is the only union of religion and civil government which the friends of Sabbath-schools desire, or would consent to. For this they “ long, for this they pray.” And may such an union of hearts and minds, in all that can promote the public welfare, be speedily consummated by the universal prevalence of true religion. May the essential principles of the Bible be thus graven on every youthful heart, and may its life-giving spirit so thoroughly pervade all our institutions, as to animate them with a sound and enduring vitality.

But to this end, parents, teachers, ministers, churches,

and all who either love God, or their country, have a great work to do. While the American Sunday School Union must rely supremely upon Heaven for support and success, *subordinately* it “lives, and moves, and has its being” in the favour of the people; especially of the pious, benevolent, and influential classes. To such, then, let me earnestly appeal on the present occasion. And,

First, to parents of every communion, and every rank in society. Consider your responsibility, and accept the aid which is proffered you, in the religious education of your children. Sabbath-schools can nowhere exist, but by your permission and countenance. For whom do so many teachers and superintendents ask the privilege of toiling, and often under great bodily exhaustion, from Sabbath to Sabbath, and year to year? Is it for themselves, or for you and those whom God hath given you? And will you not bid them God speed—will you not help them? For whom did Christ die? Was it not for your children, and will you not bring them to him in the Sabbath-school, that he may there take them up in his arms and bless them, as he has blessed thousands of others?

But here let me earnestly caution you against devolving the whole business of religious education upon others, as if their readiness to assist you could ever excuse you from the duties of catechizing and other family instruction. I greatly fear, that even many Christian parents are in fault here; and I do know, that some devoted teachers have almost doubted, on this account, whether their labours were of much use.

Now, such neglect on your part, is most ungrateful to God and to them. It is discouraging, it is cruel! It is as if you should require an overflowing benevolence, in offering to aid you in feeding and clothing your children, by just throwing off the whole burden from your own hands. And do not imagine that you have done all your duty, when you have secured the religious education of *your own* children. As it

respects other families, the only questions are, Do they need your assistance, and is it in your power to help them? How many are there, who cannot, or will not, decently clothe their children, and furnish them with the necessary books; and how comes it that you can purchase hundreds of the most interesting little volumes for your own children, at one quarter of the price which they used to cost? Could you have done it if the Sunday School Union had never been formed? And, can you not afford in your turn to help the Union? Is it not a debt which you are solemnly bound to discharge?

To those of you, my friends, who give your time and thoughts to this great work, as superintendants and teachers, much more might be said, by way of encouragement, exhortation, and advice, than the time will permit. Where then shall I begin? Shall I speak of *duty* as the constraining motive to action and perseverance? The theme before us, no doubt, is fruitful of such arguments and appeals, beyond almost any other. But the word *duty* is too cold—it has too little heart for such an enterprise as that in which you are engaged. It is a word which I am persuaded cannot be found in the vocabulary of heaven, and the sooner we can make it obsolete on earth the better. How strangely would it sound, to say that the angels serve God day and night in his upper temple, because they think it their duty to serve him! And surely it is high time, for the *church* at least, to emigrate from the polar circles of Christianity, and move nearer to the sun. To love God, and Christ, and the souls of men, is a very different thing from being convinced that it is our *duty* to love them. So to teach and pray in the Sabbath-school, under the constraining influence of *love*, is heaven-wide from any emotion which a mere sense of duty can excite.

Need I undertake to show you what a privilege it is, to be a Sabbath-school teacher, and would be to the greatest man in the world.

Suppose, then, for a moment, that you could summon around you every Lord's day, some of the most prosperous and influential men of business—some of the most devoted and useful preachers of the gospel—some of the ablest advocates and judges, and some of the most distinguished legislators of our country? Suppose you could do this as easily as you can now call your classes together, and could open the Bible before them, and impress its great truths upon their hearts and consciences, and give a permanent shape to their whole character? Would you not esteem it an honour and ■ privilege? And could you possibly exert so mighty an influence in any other way?

Well then, what are the facts in the case? Have you not actually before you, every Sabbath, some of the future ministers of the church, and rulers of the country? Some of the great merchants and bankers, jurists, legislators, and physicians of the next forty years? That little boy, who now listens to you with so much interest, and whose heart and intellect you are helping to fashion, will one day preach the everlasting gospel to the Hindoos, or the Chinese. And that other lad whom you found in a cellar, and allured to your school-room, will, in your own lifetime, be at the head of business in your city. Among those whose characters you are forming, on the eternal basis of Scriptural truth, one may be ■ Howard, another a Martyn; one a Whitfield, and another ■ Robert Hall, or Jonathan Edwards. That little child, now at the head of his class, may become another Franklin, or he may hereafter sit upon the bench of the Supreme Court, or he may one day be President of the United States!

What an influence! What an advantage, to have the first training of the young idea, and to direct the moral power of ■ great nation! The thought is prodigious. And yet it simply represents the actual prerogative of Sabbath-school teachers, wherever the system of the American Sunday School Union

shall be carried into full and complete effect. Nor is your influence as teachers at an end ; nor has it produced its grandest results when it is seen, not only in all the common walks of life, but in the high places of society—holding the awful balances of justice ; wielding the powers of argument and persuasion ; presiding over all the civil rights and institutions of a great people ; and shining in the golden candlesticks of the church. It is your higher privilege to assist in training up your classes “for glory, and honour, and immortality—in making them kings and priests unto God and the Lamb.” What power to do good ! What honour conferred upon every faithful teacher, and need I add, what amazing responsibility, is here !

Ministers of Christ ! heard ye that voice, in the hour of your consecration, “ Feed my lambs ?” How much the prosperity of this glorious cause depends upon your faithfulness, upon your influence. To say that it cannot go on “unto perfection” without you, is almost to say, that if it fails, or languishes, you must answer for it. On you it devolves, to teach the *teachers*, as well as the children of your respective charges—to counsel and encourage them in their arduous duties—to visit your congregations, and persuade them, if possible, to send every child to the Sabbath-school, ■ soon as it is capable of receiving religious instruction, and to exercise a general supervision over this blessed system of benevolence.

While the control of the American Sunday School Union, in all its vast operations, is very properly placed exclusively in the hands of laymen, they expect, they ask, I might almost say, they *implore*, your zealous and powerful co-operation. Surely, my beloved brethren, you will not disappoint them. You will not stand aloof from so glorious an enterprize. As your humble representative, I venture to pledge for you. 'Tis done. Methinks the pledge is already taken down by the recording angel. Does any one object to the record ? Let him say so,

and ere it is dry, let him send up his petition that his name may be blotted out of the book !

When you look over the immense field which is to be explored and occupied by the American Sunday School Union, and behold what wide regions of moral desolation there are in our country, I am sure, dear brethren, you will not think it enough to watch over the young of your own flocks, and to see that they are fed "with the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." You will also look after the sheep which are scattered over those vast regions, where there are no "green pastures and no still waters." Like the good Shepherd, you will "gather the lambs with your arms, and carry them in your bosoms." You will not rest till a fold is prepared, or, in other words, till a Sabbath-school is opened in every place of tents, throughout all the hundred wildernesses within our national borders. And as this great, this simple, this magnificent system of religious education extends its cheering influence, and "the desert blossoms as a rose," and you eagerly press on from every quarter, till you meet in the midst of one immense garden of the Lord, oh then, how loud, and how joyful will your shouting be, "Grace, grace unto it!"

Men of wealth—men of talent and influence—ye honoured civil fathers of the republic, my next appeal is to you. The managers of this glorious Union want all the aid you can give them, in extending the circle of its blessings. They thank you for what you have already done, and they ask you still to help them train up those rising millions, who are so soon to govern this great nation according to their pleasure—who will either keep the gallant ship in deep and peaceful waters, or dash her in pieces amid the foaming breakers.

Will you allow me to say, that there never was a more delusive, a more baseless vision, than that which has dazzled even some great minds, respecting the means and agents upon which the preservation of our liberties essentially de-

pends. Every thing is to be accomplished, as they seem to suppose, by the combined influence of popular education and free constitutions of civil government. Their theory is, that — we are now in possession of the freest and best institutions in the world, we have only to keep the people enlightened in regard to their political and religious rights—only to educate them well, in the common acceptation of the term, and all will be safe. Now this is a radical mistake. It is vainly undertaking to erect and support a magnificent edifice without a solid foundation. All the light and knowledge in the universe would not make a nation secure and happy, without the deep and broad basis of moral and religious principle. I hazard nothing in saying, that the Bible contains the only code of laws, or rather the elements of the only code, which can sustain our free government, or any other like it. All history and experience might confidently be adduced in support of this position. It is only by teaching the rising generation to “fear God and keep his commandments,” that we can induce them to “obey magistrates”—to “lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty,” and thus to maintain the great pillars of the state. By warmly patronizing Sabbath-schools, therefore, by visiting them often, and by aspiring to the honour of becoming teachers in these heaven-founded seminaries, you can do more to undergird the ship, and keep her on in the right course, than when you heave the lead, raise the quadrant, or stand at the helm.

But I must draw to a close. The time which I had a right to detain you is more than elapsed. And now, ye favoured managers of this great and blessed Union! Ye parents, teachers, ministers, churches, friends of revivals, patriots, rulers, and judges of the land—under the smiles of heaven, the success of this cause depends upon your prayers and your efforts. You are all deeply, and may I not add, equally interested in its success. By helping it forward, you advance the interest “of pure and undefiled religion”—yo

promote the happiness and true glory of the nation—you honour God and bless the world.

Go on then, I beseech you, from duty to duty—from mountain to mountain—from river to river. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Never rest till the noble work is done—till a Sabbath-school is established wherever there are children to enjoy its blessings. Never rest till you hear the shout of “Hosanna to the son of David,” from all the Atlantic coast—from the shores of the Lakes and the tops of the Alleghanies, and then from *the multitudes* ■ *multitudes, in the great valley of decision!*

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN PHILADELPHIA,

AT THE REQUEST OF

THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION.

MAY 21, 1832.

BY CHARLES HODGE,

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THE PLACE OF THE BIBLE, IN A SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

"*The entrance of thy words giveth light.*"—Ps. cxix. 130.

WE all recognise the Bible as the source of every thing which distinguishes us from the heathen. It is the fountain of knowledge, happiness, and holiness. When we consider how admirably it is adapted to produce these results, the question forces itself on our attention, why has such a book, though known and read for centuries, hitherto accomplished comparatively so little ? The general answer to this question is, no doubt, to be found in the depravity of men. But there are specific causes of this lamentable fact which should be pointed out, and, if possible, counteracted or removed. To one of these, it is the object of this discourse to call your attention. It cannot be denied, that it is only a comparatively small portion of the inhabitants of christendom, even, which has hitherto been brought under the direct and well applied influence of the word of God. It is in this fact that we find one of the principal causes of the little effect which the Scriptures have hitherto produced on the character and condition of men.

In every country there are three classes of persons who, in very different degrees, are influenced by the prevalent religion. The first includes those who sincerely

receive its doctrines, and endeavour to live according to its precepts. The second embraces those who, although acquainted with all their religion professes to teach, do not make it practically the standard of faith or rule of conduct; and the third consists of those who, being ignorant of its doctrines, are only indirectly affected by its influence. The first of these classes is always small, and the last large, in proportion to the truth and excellence of the religion. Because the clearer the light, the more do those who love darkness recede from it. In Christian countries, accordingly, the number of those who in faith and love embrace the religion of the Bible is very small; while the number of those who are only indirectly brought under its influence is very large. We do not mean to assert that this indirect influence is a matter of little moment. We believe, on the contrary, that it is difficult for any man to live in a Christian community, no matter how remote he may keep himself from all the direct means of religious instruction, without having more correct views of the Supreme Being, of moral obligations, of the nature and destiny of the soul, than were ever enjoyed in heathen lands. He is, therefore, brought under a higher moral influence, he is elevated as a rational being, and freed from the degrading tendencies of the thousand absurdities which enter into every false system of religion. Notwithstanding, however, the extent and value of this indirect influence of the Bible, the effect is slight, compared to what may reasonably be expected from its being brought to bear directly and constantly on the character and conduct of men. It is to effect this object, to bring the word of God to bear effectually on the

formation of the human character, and the regulation of human conduct, that is the end of all Christian institutions and efforts. We wish to subject the minds, the hearts, and lives of men to the Bible, that is, to truth and righteousness. This is the goal of our race, the prize of our high calling, the consummation and reward of all our labours.

How, then, is this object to be accomplished? How is the Bible to be brought to bear most effectually on the intellectual and moral character of men? We venture to answer, by employing it in the education of the young. We do not mean to disparage the preaching of the gospel, or any other means of religious instruction, but we mean to say that, if we can learn anything from the nature of moral causes, or from the general course of God's providence, if men are to be subjected to the Bible, they must be educated by the Bible, it must be made the great instrument of their intellectual and moral culture. That this has never yet been extensively effected, is an anomaly in the history of our race, and the opprobrium of Christendom. Ever since the revival of letters we have employed, in the early stages of education, heathen fables; and in the more advanced stages, heathen poets, historians, orators, and moralists. These have been, and still are, the instruments most extensively employed in the education of Christian youth. Need we wonder at the result? Notwithstanding partial exceptions, it is certainly true, that the Scriptures have been systematically excluded from the places of education; and that the great majority of Christian youth have been brought up more under the influence of heathen minds and models, than under the

inspired minds and models of the word of God. We have said it was an anomaly, that the professors of one religion should employ, mainly, works imbued with the spirit and principles of another in the education of their children. This assertion will hardly be questioned.— Every Mohammedan child, who is taught anything, is taught the Koran, from the Straits of Gibraltar to beyond the Ganges; wherever the religion of the false prophet prevails, there the standard of religion is the great instrument of education. The result is what might have been expected. The religion of the land is really the religion of the people. Its influence is diffused through all departments of society, and its spirit and precepts are practically regarded. The fact, that the followers of Mohammed employ thus extensively their sacred writings in the business of education, is not to be accounted for on the supposition that their literature is confined to the Koran: the reverse is notoriously the case. In romance, in poetry, in history, in original and translated works, their authors have been abundant and successful. But believing the Koran to be of God, they have acted accordingly. They have not professed one religion, and brought up their children under the influence of another.

The general neglect of the Bible, for the purposes of education, cannot be accounted for on the ground of its want of adaptation for this work. The object of education is to fit man for his duties and destinies; so to exercise his intellectual faculties, and so to mould his moral feelings, that he may be prepared to do and suffer what God requires at his hands. For this purpose, it may be shown the Bible is pre-eminently adapted. It

is, in fact the history of God's plan of educating the human family, and therefore furnishes us at once with the model and the means of intellectual and moral culture. The Bible commences with the simplest truths; communicating knowledge in the form of history, interspersing biographical details, with general narrative; employing symbolical actions and instructive parables; reducing general principles to sententious maxims; at one time reasoning with men in a manner to tax all their powers, at another addressing them in such strains of sublimity or beauty, as to waken up all the finer feelings of the soul. It everywhere addresses the moral feelings as the noblest attributes of our nature. It thus furnishes us with all the materials we need for this great work. The memory, judgment, imagination, may here all be exercised. Every power of the soul finds endless and boundless matter for the most strenuous effort, while every sympathy and feeling of our nature is brought under the purest and most effective influence.

We would now call your attention to some of those special considerations, which should secure for the word of God that place in the education of the young, from which it has been so long and so generally excluded.

1. The word of God is truth. It is truth in opposition to fiction in history, to error in doctrine, to false principles in morals, to all exaggeration in description. As every other production must, to a greater or less extent, abound in misstatements of facts, or erroneous views of truth, or false principles of action, or false models of character, need the question be asked, whether it is not desirable to avail ourselves of a book, so well adapted

for the purpose in every other respect, of which, and of which alone, it can be said, it is truth ?

2. The word of God is not only truth, but it is infinitely important truth. The history which it gives is the most important of all histories. It gives us an account of the creation, fall, and redemption ; it traces the development of the purposes of God's mercy from the first promise through all the institutions, events, and prophecies of the old dispensation. It unfolds the history of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Redeemer, and the establishment of his kingdom in the world. Is it meet that Christian youth should be sedulously taught the history of ancient kingdoms, or modern dynasties, and left ignorant of this history of the origin, apostacy, and redemption of their race ? And yet, thousands who learn the one never learn the other.

Again, the doctrines of the Bible are beyond comparison important. They relate to the nature and works of God ; to the nature, character, and destiny of man ; to the rule of duty and the method of salvation. Are these topics less worthy of investigation than the laws of motion, or the opinions of philosophers ? And yet, Christian men become skilled in the sciences, though they remain ignorant of God and themselves.

3. The contents of the word of God are not only true and important, but their influences are all healthful. As the great object of education is the adequate development of all the faculties of our nature ; the great desideratum is the discovery of means by which the intellect may be exercised, while the moral susceptibilities are properly impressed. The great majority of the subjects of study, in the ordinary course of education, either

do not address themselves at all to the moral feelings, or their tendency is deleterious. The natural sciences may be considered neutral; as a man may become an adept in them all, without having one moral emotion called into exercise. Ancient literature, the poets, historians, and orators of classic paganism, is in many respects positively injurious. In the Bible we find truth, adapted at once to enlarge the intellect and purify the heart. The idea of God, in the infinitude of his perfections cannot enter the mind without expanding all its capacities, while it sheds into the inmost recesses of the soul its sanctifying influence. As in the rays of the sun, light and heat are inseparably blended, and by being thus blended create and reveal all the beauty of creation, so the knowledge of God at once enlightens and purifies the soul. I speak as unto Christians, judge ye what I say. Is it not when you have the clearest conceptions of the divine character, that you have the most ardent aspirations to be like Him? Is it not by beholding His glory that you are transformed into his image? It is, then, under this same influence we would have every infant mind to expand. We would not attempt to raise flowers in a cave, nor make smoky torches a substitute for the sun. We would let the light of heaven in upon the soul.

There is probably no one idea of so much consequence, in its influence on character, as the conception of God, none which acts so powerfully on the moral feelings of men. It is therefore of the last importance that, from the first, this knowledge should be imparted to the mind. In the Holy Scriptures it is so presented,

that a child can understand, though Gabriel cannot comprehend it.

Though the same remark, as to the purifying tendency of divine truth, might be made in reference to all the doctrines of the Bible, we specify the description which it gives of the character of Jesus Christ. It has long been admitted that truth, when exemplified in the life of an individual, is more effective than when stated in abstract propositions—that biography is more useful than moral essays. It is more intelligible, more interesting, and more exciting. It enlists other feelings than the moral ones on the side of virtue. We love the man as well as his excellencies.

We believe Christianity is as much indebted to the superhuman loveliness of the character of Jesus Christ, as to any one of its doctrines. There is in this faultless model of human excellence, a moral power which few are able to resist. The lips of the most abandoned infidels have generally been closed when this was the theme. They could revile his apostles as impostors, but deliberately to speak evil of the Son of God, requires a degree of depravity to which few have ever attained. Let the child, then, be made acquainted with the Saviour, let him learn his history, let him contemplate all the varied exhibitions of his character, let him see how he felt towards God, and how he acted towards man; how he treated the poor, the afflicted, the ignorant; how he bore afflictions, and sustained injuries; how he lived, and how he died—and he will know more of morals than all the world can teach him; he will have an evidence of the truth of Christianity more persuasive than all external testimony; and he will have a more

salutary moral influence constantly operating in his mind, than all the systems of morals can exert.

Again, the Bible contains a perfect rule of moral duty, and on this account is adapted to exert the happiest influence on the mind. God has created the human soul with moral susceptibilities, which are as much an original part of its constitution as its intellectual faculties. Both classes of our constitutional powers need to be cultivated to secure their being rightly exercised. Were it possible for a man to live without any thing to inform or exercise his intellect, his mental powers would be almost dormant; and if they were as much neglected as his moral sense commonly is, he would be as dull in his perceptions, as imbecile in judgment, as erroneous in his inferences, as he is insensible or perverse in his moral sense and judgments. But as it is impossible for a man placed in an active world, to avoid having a thousand objects which daily exercise his intellectual faculties, so it is impossible for him to escape the influence which the circumstances in which he is placed, and the opinions of those around him exert over his conscience. In every age and nation, therefore, we find that the character of men, their moral sentiments and course of conduct, are determined partly, indeed, by individual peculiarities, but mainly by the tone of the society of which they are members. Such has been the effect of these circumstances in diversifying the moral judgments of men, making one class regard as virtues what another condemns as vices, that many have been led to doubt whether conscience was really an original part of our constitution. But the diversity is no greater here, than on other subjects. What is truth to one

mind is error to another, what is beauty to one eye is deformity to another. But, as to all men some things are true and others false, as to all eyes some things are beautiful and others the reverse, so to all hearts some things are right and others wrong. The diversity is not as to there being a difference between right and wrong, for this sentiment is absolutely universal, but as to what is to be considered right or wrong. How is this all-important subject to be determined? As the class of intuitive truths is very small, so the class of acts intuitively right or wrong is small. Conscience can no more infallibly decide on duty, than reason can on truth. As, therefore, reason must be instructed, so must conscience. And as conscience is one of the most powerful and imperative of our principles of action, as it, of necessity, decides in favour of what the understanding perceives to be right; and as the character and destiny of men depend on the correctness of its decision, it is of infinite importance that it should be rightly directed. This, however, is a difficult task. We need not advert to the state of degraded tribes or individuals, to illustrate the fact, that the moral sentiments of men are frequently erroneous; it is rare to find, in the most refined and Christian societies, a man whose moral sense is on all subjects rightly informed.

If, therefore, there be any where revealed a perfect rule of duty, it is self-evident that it should be universally known. This rule is found in the Bible, and nowhere else. It is there presented in every form. It is reduced to one all-comprehensive principle, love to God and man. It is summed up in ten perspicuous commandments. It is expanded into innumerable special

precepts and prohibitions, so as to meet every supposable case. That such a rule should be so neglected, that men should be carefully instructed as to other matters, and left to learn as they may, what is sin and what duty ; what will secure the favour of God, and what his frown, is indeed strange. It is the more strange, because all men need this knowledge, and they all are susceptible of the acquisition. Moral truth contains its own evidence ; as soon as it is clearly presented to the mind, it is perceived to be truth, and at once and for ever enlists conscience in its support. The moral law, moreover, comes not only in its own self-evidencing light, but with the authority of God. It is pronounced in the ear of conscience by that voice which alone conscience feels bound to obey. Its penalty (which is included in the very nature of law) is, therefore, viewed, not as a result probable from the operation of moral causes, but as fixed and inevitable from the purpose of Jehovah.

Obedience to this law is solicited, by motives addressed to every right principle of our nature ; to the dread of misery and degradation ; to the love of happiness and excellence ; to a sense of duty ; to gratitude and benevolence. These motives are not only diversified ; they are each the highest in its kind. The evil threatened is infinite ; the good promised is eternal ; the duty enjoined is obvious ; the appeal to gratitude, when apprehended, irresistible. If one died for all, then are all dead, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him that loved them, and gave himself for them. This is the peculiar and most powerful motive of the gospel. It is one of the principal means by which the doctrine of redemption operates on hu-

man character and conduct. Did the Bible contain no other doctrine, and present no other motive, it would embody more moral power than all other books besides. The Bible, then, sheds on the soul all the influences of heaven. Shall we shut these influences out? Shall we carry our children out of their range, and place them under those perverting, blinding, and degrading influences which from all other sources act upon them?

4. We have said the word of God should be employed in the education of the young, because it is truth, important truth, and truth of the most purifying moral tendency; we now add, it is divinely authoritative truth, resting not on the deduction of reason, nor on the testimony of men, but the authority of God. The effect of this consideration is great and varied. Its influence on the mind of a child is in all respects favourable. It produces the habit of relying on the testimony of God, which is one of the highest acts of obedience of an intelligent creature, and the best preservative from that fatal spirit of scepticism, which destroys all peace of mind, and unsettles all principles of action; which makes its victim the miserable creature of circumstances. It produces, therefore, a fixedness of character, by presenting a firm foundation for all our most important opinions. It confers the inestimable blessing of a settled faith, which is in no way so likely to be attained, as by being brought up in habitual converse with a book recognised as of divine authority. By giving certainty to all the declarations of the Holy Scriptures, it adds immensely to their power. It is not a matter of conjecture that God is, and is what the Bible represents him; that the soul is immortal and responsible; that Christ

died, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God ; that the threatenings and promises of God are expressions of his purposes ; but these are settled truths in view of such a mind. It tends also to produce humility ; to destroy the spirit of self-dependence and self-confidence, so characteristic of those who walk each under the guidance of his own taper.

If the ingenuity of man had been permitted to decide on what would be the most desirable of all books by which to form the human character, it would probably have said, it should be one whose contents are true, important, of a good moral influence, and, if possible, of divine authority. These are the attributes of the Bible, and of the Bible alone. If it is desirable that such a book should exert an influence at all on men, it is self-evident that it should be brought to bear on the mind in its earliest years. Then, opinions are adopted, habits formed, feelings moulded, principles fixed. If all this is done under evil influence, the evil and injury can never be entirely remedied. On this subject, however, there can scarcely be any diversity of opinion. We must all admit that it is desirable to have our children brought up under the influence of the Bible. The question is, how is this to be accomplished ? It is not very easy, in a country like ours, to answer this question. It is probable that no one plan will ever be proposed adapted to the purpose, but we shall have to avail ourselves of various methods, according to the peculiar circumstances of different sections of the country. The object, however, should be constantly kept in view, and frequently presented in its magnitude and importance. It should be the definite purpose of every Christian and philan-

thropist to do all he can to have every child in the land, every child in Christendom, and every child in the world, made acquainted with the word of God. This is the great result. For this end, every Christian parent should see that adequate provision is made in reference to his own children. But as the number of parents who have leisure and inclination to attend to this subject is very small, if left to be accomplished in this way it will never be done. Ministers of the gospel have a larger field, and a higher responsibility. I presume not to say how the duty must be performed; but that every pastor of a flock is bound to see that every child within his charge is taught the Holy Scriptures, will hardly be denied. He may do this through the instrumentality of personal instructions, or by Bible classes, and Sunday-schools. In whatever way, it is evidently one of the most imperious of his duties, that the thing should be done.

There are, however, so many who do not stand in relation to any particular congregation, that a large portion of the children of the country will grow up ignorant of the word of God, if nothing more than pastoral instruction be resorted to. This has, hitherto, been the main reliance of the Christian church: the melancholy results we every where discover. It is probable, not more than one half, perhaps not a fourth, of the inhabitants of Christendom, or even of this country, are regular attendants on public worship; that the children even of this portion are very imperfectly instructed in religion, whilst those of the remainder, on this plan, are left, and have been left, almost entirely unprovided for. Relying on parental or pastoral instruction, the church has permitted the great majority of the children born

in Christian lands to grow up ignorant of the contents, and emancipated from the influence of the word of God. This, which after all is the most crying evil of the Christian world, can, we doubt not, by steady and wise efforts, under the blessing of God, be corrected. In a Christian community there is such a general respect for the Scriptures, that the cases are comparatively rare in which any serious opposition would be made to their introduction, as a regular subject of study in the common schools: not merely to be read, but to be studied as they now are in our Sabbath-schools. Let any one imagine what would be the influence on the population of this country, if one hour a day should, in all the common schools of the land, be devoted to this purpose. What an amount of Christian knowledge would be communicated, and what a healthful moral influence would be exerted. Every child who is taught to read would be taught to know God, and Jesus Christ; the rule of duty, and the plan of salvation. As there is nothing wrong in this plan, as it contemplates no evil, as it is adapted to do immense good, we have little doubt it would soon enlist the support of the community in its behalf. As the parents of the children make choice of the teacher, there seems to be no room for the misgivings of sectarian feelings.

In our higher schools the same plan should be continued: if children learn history, let them include the history of the Bible; if they learn geography, let them study the geography of the Bible. Is it not preposterous, making the professions which we do, that we allow our sons and daughters to be taught the history and geography of profane antiquity, but make no provision for

what we acknowledge to be of far greater importance. In classical institutions a regular exercise on the Holy Scriptures, in the original, might be introduced with equal advantage. And in our colleges, the study of the Bible is already, to a certain extent, attended to, and, as far as we know, without exciting in any quarter the least objection.

Though these, and other means may, and we think ought, to be adopted, to secure the grand object of raising up a generation of scripturally educated youth, yet the main reliance seems to be placed at present on the system of Sabbath-school instruction. A system peculiarly adapted to the wants and circumstances of the country, and which has already been crowned with the most encouraging success. The managers of the American Sunday-school will be able to report 500,000 children every week brought under the influence of divine truth, instructed by 80,000 teachers. It is the very object of this institution to do what has so long and so lamentably been neglected: to bring the light of divine truth to bear upon the opening minds of children. The work, however, is far from being accomplished: a large proportion of the children, even of this country, are still left to grow up, in a great measure, ignorant of God, and of the Scriptures. And when we look to other and less favoured lands, the prospect is appalling. We should, therefore, contemplate the reasons which demand renewed exertion to promote biblical instruction.

1st. Its influence on individual character and happiness. If the remarks we have already made, as to the necessity of moral culture to the right exercise of conscience and the proper formation of moral principles,

be correct, it is evident that the only possible way in which virtue can be maintained is by knowledge. And knowledge, not of speculative truth, which imparts no light, and exerts no influence over the moral sense, but such knowledge as the Holy Scriptures alone contain—the knowledge of God, of the moral law, of the plan of salvation, and the retributions of eternity. Such is the universality and power of the corrupt passions of our nature, that no external force can restrain their exercise. The power must be the moral power of truth, and the Spirit of God. Such, too, is the sluggishness of all good feelings, that no excitements other than those which flow from the Scriptures, are adequate to call them into exercise. The effect on the individual of the knowledge of the Scriptures is to expand his mind, to purify and restrain his moral feelings, to raise him in the scale of intellectual and moral being. Go into the abodes of ignorance; contrast the state of the immortal minds there presented, with that of those on whom the word of God has exerted its appropriate influence. How vast the difference between spirits of the same nature and of the same powers. The benefit, however, is not confined to this general elevation and improvement. It is the best possible preparation for the saving reception of the gospel. This is a fact which rests on long-continued and often repeated experience. The power and success of the Gospel in the ordinary course of God's dispensations, (which is to guide our conduct) are uniformly, where other things are equal, in exact proportion to the attention bestowed on the religious instruction of the young. It is from the class of scripturally educated youth that the church receives

her largest and most valuable accessions. It is in those districts, countries, and ages, in which children are best instructed, that true religion most prevails. If this were not the case, it would be an anomaly in God's government, it would destroy all incentive to the duty, which he has enjoined, to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; it would be falsifying the declaration of his own word, as to the general result of moral culture, and dissolving the connexion which he has established, in the moral as well as the natural world, between causes and their appropriate effects. Of all the advantages which one man can bestow upon another, none can be compared with securing for him an education under the influence of the Bible. Of all the injuries which one man can entail on others, the greatest is to shut out from them the light of truth; to allow them to grow up far from the influence of the word of God. Let your minds rest upon this point. Let the conviction fasten itself upon you, that you can in no way do so much good, in no way more effectually promote the salvation of your fellow-men, than by educating them by the Bible. He who feeds and clothes the body does well, but he who furnishes the soul with the aliment of truth, and the habiliments of righteousness, does infinitely better. We are bound, therefore, in view of the value of the human soul, considered as an intellectual, moral, and immortal being, to do all we can to bring the truth of God to bear on the forming stage of its existence.

2d. Influence on society. The soul of man is not formed to commence and run its everlasting career between high walls; neither influencing others, nor receiving impressions from them. No individual is thus

isolated. He acts, and is acted upon, in ten thousand ways; and the character of society is the result of this reciprocal influence of its members. The only way in which we can promote the virtue and happiness of the community, is by operating on the individuals of which it is composed. Every well-instructed and pious mind which we are instrumental in raising up, becomes a source of knowledge and healing influence to all around. Our own interests, and the interests of our children, and of the world, are deeply concerned in the increase of such morally educated men. On them, the order, purity, and happiness of society depend. In this country, where the majority of the people have in fact, and of right, all power in their hands, it is self-evident that our political existence depends on the moral character of the people. This is a sentiment on every man's lip, and should be in every man's heart. As the influence of free institutions, in elevating the intellectual character, and the social condition of the mass of the people, in developing their resources, and increasing their power of usefulness, is undeniable, it becomes a moral duty to ourselves, and to our country, and to the world, to do all we can to perpetuate them in the midst of us. We now stand forth the prototype of nations, imparting impulse and direction to their efforts. If we fail, and fail we must, unless our youth be made acquainted with the Scriptures, we shall be accountable for all the evil that failure must occasion.

The position of our country, however, is not only interesting, as it exhibits the first extended experiment of free institutions, but as here the church and religion are unincumbered, and left to sustain themselves, under

God, upon their own moral power. We have not ■ doubt of the ultimate success of this trial. We would not for the world have it otherwise. If Christianity cannot live and thrive unsustained by the state, it is not of God. But how it shall live, and to what extent it shall flourish, God has wisely and mercifully made to depend on the fidelity of his people. It is through them he works in sustaining and advancing his cause. On us, therefore, rests the tremendous responsibility of carrying on this work. If we do not our duty, the cause cannot, according to God's appointment, prosper. And in no way can we so effectually subserve its interests, as in promoting the cause of biblical instruction.

The career which we are destined to run as a nation is lofty; from our relative position; from our extent of territory; from the character of the people; from the nature of our institutions; from the identity of our language; from the state of civilization—our influence among the nations, and on the world, must be unprecedentedly great. Shall it be for weal or wo? Shall it be to disseminate error and vice, or truth and virtue? Shall it be to lead on the van in the moral conquest of the world, or shall it be to oppose the progress of its Redeemer, until we ourselves are cast off, and trodden under foot? The answer depends on the character of the young; and this, on the mode of their education, unless God means to convert the world by miracles.

We commend this subject to your hearts and efforts. We hold up the cause of Sunday-schools as intimately connected with that of religious education; as one of the main hopes of our country and the world. We call on all who love the cause of the Redeemer; who desire

the virtue and happiness of their fellow-men, and the salvation of their souls, to address themselves to this great work, in humble dependence upon God, and in the full assurance that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.—Amen.

THE END

THE USEFULNESS
OF
SUNDAY-SCHOOLS;
A SERMON,

REACHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION, IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,
PHILADELPHIA, MAY 20TH, 1833.

BY J. P. K. HENSHAW, D. D.
RECTOR OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH, BALTIMORE.

PUBLISHED ■■ REQUEST OF ■■ BOARD OF MANAGERS.

PHILADELPHIA:
AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION.
NO. 146 CHESTNUT STREET.

1950年1月2日

晴天，气温较低，风速较大。

1950年1月3日

晴天，气温较低，风速较大。

1950年1月4日

晴天，气温较低，风速较大。

1950年1月5日

晴

A SERMON.

"And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord."
Isaiah liv. 13.

No employment can be more pleasing and grateful to the pious heart than meditation upon the love of God to his church. That love, like his own nature, is *the same from everlasting to everlasting; without variableness or shadow of turning*. It governed the counsels of Deity before time began, originated the scheme of redemption, and called the earth into being as the theatre on which that scheme should be accomplished. It has regulated the principal acts of Jehovah in his dealings with individuals and communities, from the commencement of this world's history to the present period, and will constitute the prominent theme of his praise when the world shall be no more. Most wonderfully has it been displayed in the preservation of the church amidst the dangers and persecutions to which, through the corruption of men and the malignity of devils, she has in all ages been exposed. In the darkest hours, when her radiance seemed to be utterly obscured by the mists of error or the clouds of corruption, she has heard the command of her divine, unchanging lover, *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* In times of the deepest depression, when her enemies raised the shout of triumph, and she was threatened with shameful overthrow, if not entire annihilation; suddenly the

arm of Jehovah has been made bare for her deliverance, and her almost expiring hopes have been reanimated by the cheering assurance, Fear not, for I am with thee : be not dismayed, for I am thy God. Fear not, for I have redeemed thee : I have called thee by thy name : thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee : and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned : neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel thy Saviour. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper ; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.†*

What a pathetic exhibition and attractive picture of God's love to the church is given in the chapter before us? *Fear not ; for thou shalt not be ashamed : neither be thou confounded ; for thou shalt not be put to shame : for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy maker is thy husband ; the Lord of Hosts is his name : and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel ; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and as a wife of youth when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me ; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains*

* *Isaiah xlivi. 1, 2.*

† *Ibid. liv. 17.*

shall depart and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

And as if these plain and positive assurances of unchanging love were not sufficient, the Lord, in the words immediately preceding the text, describes, in highly metaphorical language, the great things which he would do for his church. *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord ; and great shall be the peace of thy children.* Under this strikingly beautiful and gorgeous imagery, the church is represented as a forsaken and unprotected female sailing in a shattered bark upon a perilous ocean, tossed and buffeted by the merciless waves ; or, as a desolate and mourning widow, venting her sorrows beneath the shelter of a frail tent, or tabernacle, agitated by every breeze, and liable to be blown down by every wind. But how glorious is the change which God engages to make in her condition ? He promises to take her from this fragile bark, or perishable tabernacle ; and to erect for her permanent habitation a palace or city ; firm, durable, beautiful ; constructed of precious stones, and adorned with the most costly materials ; having for its “ walls, salvation, and its gates, praise.” There, secure from the power and malice of all enemies, the once desolate and afflicted church shall have a safe and glorious resting-place. All enclosed within the sacred walls shall learn the principles of piety, and taste the precious fruits of peace and

righteousness and joy. *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.*

This prophecy relates not so much to the outward glory, as to the inward and spiritual prosperity of the church of God. Nor can we suppose that it received its accomplishment at the first publication of the gospel, and the calling of the Gentiles to the knowledge of salvation. Great, indeed, was the change then effected in the condition of the church, but a far greater change is yet to come. A more illustrious era is still to break upon the view of an admiring world; even that *latter day glory, when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.*

Lift up your eyes and behold the approaching lustre of that day, like the morning spread upon the mountains! See in the extending benevolent operations of the age, the continued indications of God's love to Zion! The foundations of that city which God promised to build, was laid by the Lord Jesus Christ in his work of redemption; his apostles and their successors have built upon this good foundation, "gold, silver, precious stones;" and in the Bible, Missionary, Education, Sunday-school, Tract, and other kindred societies, we behold many associated bands of artificers diligently employed in forwarding the construction of the edifice. May it go on, till its walls form the boundaries of the globe, and men of all nations are numbered among its citizens!

But we must withdraw for a season from this wide and animating field of sublime meditation, and confine our present view to a particular department of the benevolent operations by which this grand result is to be

produced. The occasion requires us to speak of the blessed Sunday-school system, which is doing an important part in securing the foundation, cementing the walls, and adorning the palaces of the city of our God. This is, without controversy, one of the most efficient agents employed by the great Head of the church in accomplishing the prophecy of the text, *and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord.*

The Sunday-school system! There is something hallowed and delightful in the very title! If I were to treat of this system in all its bearings,—of the history of its origin and progress,—the wisdom and benevolence of its principles,—the self-denial, prayer, holiness, and energy required for its successful prosecution, and all the hallowing influence it exerts upon the condition and destiny of man in both worlds,—days might be profitably employed in the discussion. But I shall confine myself to one point—the *utility* of the Sunday-school system.

Some may consider this like an attempt to illuminate a sunbeam, or demonstrate a self-evident proposition which no one questions. They will say, “it is a trite subject, and stands in need of no further argument and illustration.” The business of education in general is a trite subject; yet who will deem it needless further to explain its principles, display its advantages, and urge its claims? The fundamental doctrines of the gospel are hackneyed themes, yet who will say they require no further enforcement or illustration? The faithful minister who watches for souls as one that must give an account, may address his hearers in the language of the Apostle, *to repeat the same things, to me indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*

The simple and well known truths of religion must

be repeated, and re-repeated, if necessary; they must be presented in all the variety of lights of which they are susceptible; and enforced by the most powerful arguments and motives we can command, till their full effect is produced in the sanctification of the hearts and lives of men. From my soul I pity the preacher who goes in pursuit of what is novel, ingenious, and sublime, while souls are perishing around him for lack of the simple truth as it is in Jesus. My heart bleeds for the hearer who longs for the gratification of a vitiated appetite for things strange and marvellous, instead of receiving with meekness the ingrafted word which is able to save his soul. We dare not say that the gospel needs no further commendation while so many thousands favoured with its ministrations close their eyes against its light, and three fourths of our fallen race have never heard its offers of mercy. Neither dare we to say, that the utility of the Sunday-school system is sufficiently known and appreciated, while so many in Christian countries bear no part in its operations, and hundreds of millions in all lands are sighing for a participation in its blessings. The limited extension of the benefits of this system, in comparison with the moral wants of the world, is a sufficient proof that few have made any proper estimate of their magnitude. If I succeed, therefore, in giving you a vivid impression of some of the most obvious of them, the few can sustain no injury from having their pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance, and I shall be abundantly rewarded for the present effort, if even one who has been heretofore an indifferent spectator, can be persuaded to become henceforth a zealous co-operator in this "work of faith, and labour of love."

In this humble attempt to illustrate the utility of Sunday-schools, we propose,

I. To notice their beneficial influence upon *the scholars.*

This species of charitable effort has been objected to, — interfering with the domestic relation, and relaxing the sacred tie by which parents and children are bound together. If this objection were valid and well sustained, it would be impossible, upon Christian principles, to vindicate, much more, to advocate earnestly the system in question. For the great Lord and Creator of all, having established the domestic relation in the earliest period of the history of the world, stamped it with a peculiar sacredness, as an institution essential to the security and happiness of man's social state. In all his dispensations, he has guarded its purity and regulated its reciprocal duties by the most explicit and solemn commandments. While the law requires children to reverence and obey their parents, and enforces the duty by the most encouraging promises, and the most fearful threatenings; it binds parents, by sanctions no less solemn and awful, to love and cherish their offspring: not only to protect them against temporal dangers, and provide for their bodily wants, but to teach them the principles of wisdom and piety,—to restrain their vicious propensities, discipline their moral habits,—consecrate them to God in holy covenant; and by instruction, example, and prayer, do their utmost to *train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

No power on earth can release parents from the obligations solemnly imposed on them by Divine authority. And they incur a tremendous guilt, for which they will be held answerable at the last day, who neglect the spi-

ritual interests of their offspring, and fail to point out to them the path to holiness and heaven. Christian parents, however, who "travail in birth for their children till Christ be formed in them," the hope of glory, so far from considering the Sunday-school as easing them of a burden which God and nature have connected with the relation they sustain, will regard it only as an auxiliary to them in the good work of domestic discipline and instruction. They consider it only as supplying their "lack of service"—following out with greater minuteness and fulness than their time or avocations will admit, the system of religious education which they approve of—and giving additional vividness and power to the good impressions produced at the fireside, or the domestic altar. It may fairly be presumed, therefore, that every Christian parent will be a friend of the Sunday-school; and, so far from considering it as exempting him from his parental obligations, will be stimulated to greater diligence in the discharge of them, and be thankful to God for any aid it may afford him in the important work of leading his children to the knowledge of Christ, and training them up for eternal glory. Go through the land, and where will you find the brightest examples of zeal and fidelity in domestic worship, discipline, and instruction? Is it among those who are inimical or indifferent to Sunday-schools—or in those habitations whose masters approve of them, and whose youthful inmates enjoy the benefit of their nursing care? No man of observation will hesitate a moment in giving such a reply as will prove a death-blow to the objection we have noticed.

But it is a peculiar excellence of the Sunday-school, that, as to its original design and actual operation, it

performs the duty of a Christian parent for those multitudes of children who are doomed to encounter the evils of spiritual orphanage. The melancholy fact is (alas! that it should be so!) that, a large number of parents, even in nominally Christian communities, think that they have discharged their duty to their offspring in merely providing for their animal wants, while, without an effort to prevent it, they leave their intellectual and moral powers to be utterly neglected or perverted. Those hapless children are treated as if they had no souls. To them the weekly return of the Sabbath is marked only as a season of more than usual idleness and dissipation. No parental hand leads them to the house of God. No family Bible is opened for their perusal, or sheds its sacred light upon their pathway to immortality. No mother's lips are opened with affection and tenderness to instruct them in their Maker's law, and tell them the wonderful history of their Redeemer's love. No father invites them to kneel before the domestic altar, and unite their voices with his in supplicating the protection, guidance, and blessing of the great God and Father of all.

Multitudes of such children there are, especially amongst the crowded population of our large cities, who even in this Christian land, are growing up as ignorant of God, as unmindful of eternal things, as reckless of the claims of virtue, as though their lot had been cast amidst the darkness of the pagan world. It is to these neglected children of poverty, especially, that the Sunday-school system directs its beneficent regard. It washes them from the pollution contracted by their vicious associations—rescues them from their profanations of the Sabbath, civilizes their characters, refines

their manners, purifies their principles, illuminates their understandings, elevates them to the dignity of rational beings, and aims, with the divine blessing, to make them the children of God and heirs of immortality.

Take as an example of their beneficial influences the case of one poor boy. He was brought into the world under circumstances of infamy ; his birth-place a miserable hovel ; his only natural protector, a degraded woman destitute of maternal affection, who viewed him only as a living witness of her guilt—an aggravation of her sorrows. His infant limbs were half covered with filthy rags : his first lessons were those of vice : his earliest accents those of profanity and sin. The daily witness of drunkenness and profligacy during his childish years, and unblest with any counteracting restraints, there was every reason to believe that he would soon acquire the manners of a brute, and the spirit of a fiend. There was a moral certainty, that, without some merciful interposition, he would be trained up to beggary and crime in this world, and for perdition in the next. But, thanks be to God ! one did mercifully interpose in his behalf. The teacher of a Sunday-school entered that abode of wretchedness and vice, looked upon that poor, neglected child, under the influence of the compassionate spirit which dwelt in *Him* who came *to seek and to save that which was lost*, and resolved to attempt his deliverance from ruin. The mother, without any view, perhaps, to the benefit of her offspring, but solely to be freed from trouble, yielded to the request of her benevolent visiter, and the child was introduced to the Sabbath-school. How novel and strange was the scene which then surrounded him ! He heard for the first time the name of Jesus and the voice of prayer ! He was im-

patient of the restraints imposed upon him, like the savage when first subjected to the forms and habits of civilized society. But he saw contentment and happiness pictured in the countenances of the children around him. The tones of affection and kindness, such as he had never heard before, which fell from his teacher's lips, subdued and softened his spirit; and he could not but yield to the solicitations of one who seemed anxious to make him happy. Again and again did he visit the hallowed scene to which he had been so unexpectedly introduced, till his chief pleasure during the week consisted in reflecting upon the exercises of the past, and anticipating the instructions of the coming Sabbath. New faculties seemed to have been awakened within him. He was brought, as it were, into a new world—placed under the influence of new sympathies—and had access to sources of enjoyment of which previously he could form no conception. His mind was continually expanding by the acquisition of useful knowledge, and his heart became gradually but permanently impressed by religious truth. Through the kind offices of his Christian instructor, he was trained up to an honest and useful calling. The eye of the devoted teacher followed that pupil through the dangerous season of youth, and saw him in manhood discharging the functions of a respectable citizen, and a useful member of the church of God. He saw him regulated by Christian principle in the performance of the duties of life, and sustained by Christian comforts under its afflictions, till, in the enjoyment of faith and hope, he rested from his earthly labours.

In the case of that individual, how blessed were the effects of Sunday-school instruction? It made in his

character and condition all the difference between barbarism and civilization, ignorance and knowledge, vice and virtue, infamy and respectability, hell and heaven!

This supposed case may be received as a fair representation of many which have occurred in the real history of this benevolent enterprise. And when we reflect that the system which is capable of producing such effects is now in a course of application to tens and hundreds of thousands in different parts of the world, what mind is capable of computing the immense amount of benefit that will accrue from it to the poor children who are the subjects of its influence? The computation would require an angel's powers, and the extent of good could be measured only on the scale of eternity! I do not hesitate to avow my conviction that the most liberal estimate which might be formed by the most enthusiastic admirer of the system, would be likely to fall far short of the reality.

II. As an additional illustration of the utility of Sunday-schools, we may notice their beneficial influence upon *the teachers*.

This, like every other work of Christian benevolence, is "twice blessed"—it blesses him who gives as well as him who receives. And I should feel some hesitation in deciding on which of these two classes the divine benediction is most liberally bestowed.

The Sunday-school system has opened a new era in the history of benevolence. The youth of former generations took little or no interest in the operations of pious charity. They were all managed by the old or middle aged. It was not till persons had advanced beyond the years of maturity that they felt any responsibility as to the exertion of an influence that would be

salutary to the community at large; and the youthful members of the church took no part in public charities, and especially those that were connected with religion. Such occupations might then have been considered too grave for their years, or perhaps too serious an encroachment upon the licensed period of frivolity and pleasure.

But the introduction of the Sunday-school system has thrown open a wide field of benevolent effort, affording ample scope for the exercise of the ardour, enthusiasm, and activity of youth under the guiding influence of the wisdom and judgment of age. And how important are the consequences, how precious the fruits of this system to the youth of Christendom! How momentous the change it has produced in the moral aspect of society! Upon what multitudes of our precious youth has the Sunday-school system exerted a hallowing influence, permanent in its character and glorious in its results! Thousands and tens of thousands who, but for the introduction of this system, would have grown up in thoughtless folly—the sparkling and airy nothings of fashionable life—having no end but pleasure—no employment but vain show; have now learned that they may live to some good purpose, and under a conviction of responsibility for the improvement of their time and talents, are now actively employed as benefactors of their species, and faithful servants of their God.

There is something in the very employment of a Sunday-school teacher, which gives stability to the principles, dignity to the character, and joy to the hearts of those who engage in it. If we appeal to our Christian friends who have long been employed in the duties of this responsible office, they will tell us, that notwithstanding all the self-denial and labour, the trials of pa-

tience, and temper, and faith connected with it; they find in it a precious and most abundant reward. While inculcating the principles of Christian belief upon their youthful charge, they find their own faith confirmed and strengthened. While speaking to them of a Saviour's love, it is more richly shed abroad in their own hearts. While urging them to repent and enter upon the path of salvation, their own souls become contrite, and they are prompted to give all diligence to make their own calling and election sure. Even amidst their greatest toils and discouragements, conscience utters its approving voice; and when they behold the good seed taking root in the tender soil of an infant's heart, they feel a joy second only to that of the angels of God over sinners brought to repentance.

Such, beyond all controversy, are the blessed effects of this employment on those who engage in it with pious principles and renewed hearts. Their lot, in comparison with that of ordinary Christians, is like that of the favoured plants of the hot-house when compared with that of the common flowers of the garden or the field. Under the most favourable auspices, they are constantly reaping the benefits of the choicest culture, emitting the sweetest odours of piety, and ripening for the joys of eternal life. Ay, and many a useless shrub, on being transplanted from the world's waste field into these choice spots of religious cultivation, have, under the influence of the dews of Zion, changed their nature, and been transformed into trees of righteousness which the Lord's right hand hath planted.

How many are there who can say, "When we entered the Sunday-school as teachers, in compliance with the wishes of pious parents, or friends, we were stran-

gers to God and the hope of heaven ; but while attempting to instruct others, the light of salvation dawned upon our own souls!" In the great day of eternity, multitudes, in relating the history of their conversion, will doubtless ascribe it, under God, to their engaging in this benevolent work, and say, " we entered the Sunday-school ignorant and unrenewed ; but while engaged in the work of Jesus, we received the spirit of Jesus ; and that scene of pious labour proved to our souls none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven!" Of the immense multitude which no man can number, who shall stand on mount Zion with crowns upon their heads and harps in their hands, to sing the anthem of redeeming love—hundreds of thousands, nay, millions, we may presume, will have been Sunday-school teachers, who will joyfully reflect on their pious employment upon earth as the instrumental cause of their conversion, or their spiritual improvement ; and every such reflection will give a new impulse to their gratitude, and add a higher note to their song of praise.

III. But to do justice to our theme, and produce any thing like an adequate conviction of the excellence of this system, we must go beyond the walls of the Sunday-school, and the salutary influence exerted upon those who are immediately engaged in its benevolent operations—and give a slight sketch of some of the benefits which result from it to *society at large*.

This age has been fruitful in schemes for meliorating the condition of the poor, and lessening the crimes and burdens of social life. For the attainment of these desirable ends, the man of science has taxed his ingenuity to the uttermost, the philanthropist has exhausted his resources, and the patriot put forth his mightiest ener-

gies. But I am free to avow the opinion that the Sunday-school system will be found of more extensive application and more efficient power in the correction of these public evils, than all the plausible schemes which philosophers and political economists can devise. The great end of human laws is, or should be, not so much to punish crime, as to prevent the commission of it. Is this end gained by the infliction of penalties upon old and hardened offenders, while their youthful offspring are permitted to grow up under the evil influences which will almost necessarily produce the same corrupt fruits? Alas! this is only cutting off the branches of a poisonous tree, while its root remains fixed and immovable: it is but cleansing the stream while the fountain remains turbid. But moral and religious education lays the axe to the root of the evil—purifies the fountain of society. To begin with the instruction and discipline of the young, therefore, is the true policy of civil government so far as relates to the prevention of crime. And how powerfully is this theory sustained by the testimony of experience and fact? Could you know the history of the wretched beings whose lives have fallen a sacrifice for their crimes, or of the multitudes who fill the penitentiaries and criminal prisons, how few of them would you find who had enjoyed the blessings of a religious education? Robert Raikes, the venerable founder of the system we are advocating, stated many years ago, that during a period of twenty years, which had then elapsed since the establishment of Sunday-schools at Gloucester, about three thousand children had received education there; and that although he regularly visited the county and city jails, he met, during that period, with one instance only of criminality in any

of those three thousand persons. And we should not, perhaps, be wide of the truth, if we were to say that of the millions of children who have been inmates of Sunday-schools, not ten have ever been convicted of a capital offence.*

Pauperism is the twin-sister, or rather, the foster-mother of vice: it maintains an affiliated kindred with crime; and general education, upon Christian principles, constitutes the only adequate corrective of both. The common estimate, founded upon facts, is, that ninety-nine hundredths of the cases of crime and pauperism in this happy land, originate in intemperance, idleness, and Sabbath-breaking. Destroy the seed, and the fruit will die as a matter of course. Now this can be done only by the patient, moral, and religious cultivation of the infant mind. "If any check can be given to the corruption of a state increasing in riches and declining in morals, it must be given, not by laws enacted to alter the inveterate habits of men, but by education adapted to form the hearts of children to a proper sense of moral and religious excellence."† This is the sole employ-

* Joseph Lancaster stated that he had never heard that any ■■■■ of the four thousand children whom he had educated at the Borough School, London (though taken from the lowest classes of society), had been charged in a court of justice with any offence.—*Vide Edinburgh Review, No. 33. p. 66.*

In the course of a examination which took place in A. D. 1815, before a committee of the House of Commons, appointed to inquire into the evils and best preventives of mendicity, it was stated by persons who had been several years engaged in Sunday-schools in London, that though they had taken particular pains to watch the course of their pupils, they had never known one who had been educated at a Sunday-school to become a common beggar.

† Bishop Watson.

ment of Sunday-schools. The favoured inmates of those nurseries of piety are carefully imbued with principles which will be a most effectual barrier against all those influences which would be likely to render them either the curses or the burdens of society. No child will learn *intemperance* in the Sunday-school, for the paramount law of the institution is the Bible, which teaches that *drunkards shall not enter the kingdom of God.* No child will learn *idleness* there; for the law is, *if any will not work, neither should he eat.* No child will learn *Sabbath-breaking* there, for the law is, *remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.*

Nor is the benefit of the instruction confined to the immediate recipient. He takes it with him to his home, and imparts it to the listening members of the domestic circle. The lessons of each returning Sabbath are repeated in many a dwelling place—and many a Sunday-scholar has proved an effectual re-prover of vice and preacher of righteousness to the mother who nursed and the father who begat him. In this silent and imperceptible manner, this holy system of benevolence is performing wonders in reforming the habits of the nation, and many dens of infamy and vice are being purified from their corruptions by the cleansing waters of the sanctuary.

Here, then, we behold the best preventive which the wisdom or the benevolence of man ever devised for the greatest evils of society. Let the Sunday-school system, aided by a system of general education during the week, become universal in its application—let it be brought to bear in all its restraining and sanctifying power upon the entire mass of the rising generation, and not, as now, upon only a small portion of it—and

many generations will not pass away before pauperism and crime will disappear. The gibbet and the gallows may be dispensed with; the hangman may be dismissed from office; our penitentiaries will be no longer useful, except as receptacles for the insane; and our alms-houses may be converted into nurseries of learning, or houses of prayer. Then should we behold a fulfilment of the prophecy in the text, *all thy children shall be taught of the Lord. Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God!*

Moral and religious education, important as it is for the interests of society in every land, is pre-eminently so in this republic. In our favoured country, where the government is dependent on the popular will, and, without preference of birth or fortune, all are entitled to the rights of citizenship and eligible to stations of honour and power; our only security under God, for the preservation of our free institutions and the wise administration of our laws, is in the intelligence and virtue of the people. Put the free exercise of the elective franchise into the hands of an ignorant and vicious population, and how fatally would it be used as an engine of destruction and death! Even now, notwithstanding the powerful restraint imposed by the wide diffusion of the means of education, how often are scenes of drunkenness and riot exhibited at the polls, permitted to disgrace our boasted birth-right, and mingle their polluting influence with the exercise of the highest privilege of freemen! On witnessing such a spectacle, we are forced to ask, is liberty a blessing? Is this a nation of enlightened republicans, or of brutal, besotted jacobins? This foul blot upon our escutcheon, which calls forth

the scorn of other nations and the lamentation of the virtuous of our own, can be wiped off only by the influence of general religious education. Such an education teaches men how to use their liberty so as not to abuse it: to maintain the government, respect the laws, and promote the peace, harmony, and prosperity of the nation; *giving honour to whom honour is due—custom, to whom custom—fear, to whom fear.* Persons brought up under its influence will not be led blindfold by interested demagogues, but will independently exercise their right of choice, as intelligent and virtuous citizens, who have a deep interest at stake in the welfare of the community; and will exercise it with wisdom and discretion. The plotters of disunion cannot convert them into servile tools: and enemies to the constitution will find in such a population a bulwark that will be proof against their treasonable designs. In the hands of such a people, our institutions and our liberties will be safe. Under their auspices, this happy country, standing forth in its unique glory as the strong citadel of freedom, the proud monument of the wisdom and patriotism of our fathers—serving as a model to awaken in other nations the love of liberty, and as a beacon to guide them in the path for its attainment—would present a spectacle that would command the admiration and excite the imitation of the world.

May every patriot and every philanthropist show himself to be the decided and zealous friend of early, general, religious education! This is the mighty instrument to be employed in the reformation of the world. It will subvert the fabrics of despotism and superstition—teach every man to maintain his own rights without infringing upon those of his fellows—make

every nation regard the rights of other nations—and cause the rights of God to be acknowledged and respected by all, from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same.

IV. Much has been said already to illustrate the usefulness of the Sunday-school system; but the one half of its excellence would not be told, if I were to conclude without a notice of *the benefits it confers upon the church.*

This system is rendered especially sacred, not only by its connexion with the day which we are commanded to remember and keep holy, but also by its direct bearing upon man's immortal part and everlasting destiny. He takes a very inadequate view of it who contemplates it merely as affecting the temporal welfare of individuals, and the peace, order, and prosperity of social life. Its great end is the salvation of souls and the glory of God. The office of a Sunday-school teacher has a close affinity with that of the divinely instituted ministry of the gospel. It is a most valuable auxiliary in the great work of reconciling sinners to God and rescuing them from death. When we consider that the Bible is the text-book of the Sunday-school; that divine truth is presented in a catechetical form, and contained in almost all the lessons; that its inmates receive *line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little;* that faith, and love, and prayer are sweetly mingled with all its operations; that all its exercises are “begun, continued and ended in God;” how powerful must be the influence it exerts upon the spiritual interests of all connected with it? The human mind is so constituted as to be more readily affected by love and tenderness than by fear and terror. Sinners

are converted, not by the thunders of Sinai, but by the gracious offers of pardon proclaimed from the hill of Zion. The law of the Sunday-school is love. It bears in every part the impress of benevolence; and its every feature is characterized by tenderness and mercy. How admirably is it adapted to subdue the perversity of the will, soften the ferocity of the passions, and win the affections of the soul! What a successful instrument is it in the conversion of youth to God! And how powerfully does it contribute to fulfil the designs and promote the glory of Him who said, *suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God!*

Its beneficial influence upon the church, however, is no longer a matter of speculation, but is recorded among the sober facts of history. Wherever Sunday-schools have been established upon evangelical principles, they have proved the birth-place of souls born of God, and nurseries for the communion of the faithful. What Christian pastor, in looking round upon his flock, to take a grateful survey of those who hear and obey the voice of the good Shepherd, and whom he hopes to meet among the redeemed when the Lord cometh in his glory—does not include in the number many precious youth who are, or have been, connected with his Sunday-schools? And when he enters those nurseries of piety to look after the lambs of his fold, how many does he find engaged in the delightful task of communicating to others the same instructions which, in the same place, had formerly proved the means of life and salvation to their own souls? O how animating are the prospects associated with the fact now referred to! Those teachers trained for their employment in the

Sunday-school itself, and engaging in it under the impulse of gratitude for benefits there received, will generally manifest a patience, diligence, energy, and perseverance in the work which we may in vain expect from others. With them are connected our best hopes for the permanency and efficiency of the system. It is thus endowed with the power of self-preservation; will furnish for its own wants a succession of teachers, like streams from a perennial fountain, and transmit its unspeakable benefits from generation to generation.*

* It is to be lamented that more pains have not been taken to lay before the public, from time to time, an accurate and condensed statement of what may be called the *statistics* of Sunday-schools. If a summary tabular view (to be relied on for its accuracy) of the number of teachers engaged, of scholars taught, hopeful conversions which have taken place, &c. &c., during a period of five or ten years, in all the Sunday-schools connected with the American and other Unions, could occasionally be presented to the community, how powerful would be its influence in stimulating the zeal of the friends of the system, and refuting the objections of its enemies! How few are there who would not be astonished at the prodigious results of this one branch of evangelical operations! As an example of the kind of information wanted, the author takes the liberty of stating a few facts in the history of the Sunday-schools attached to the congregation under his pastoral charge. Doubtless there are many Sunday-schools in the country whose history would exhibit facts, under the different heads of information, far more animating and satisfactory.

Number of scholars received into the Female Sunday-school of St. Peter's church, Baltimore, from the time of its organiza- tion, in the autumn of 1817, to November, 1832,	- - - - -	4,476
Ditto in Male Sunday-school, about,	- - - - -	3,000
Number of teachers employed in the Female Sunday-school during the same period,	- - - - -	134
Ditto in Male do.	- - - - -	150
Number who were once scholars, and afterwards became teachers, so far as ascertained,	- - - - -	60

In those seasons of mercy, called revivals of religion, with which God has so signally blessed our age and country, how large a proportion of the converts is taken from those who, in the providence of God, are connected with this department of Christian charity! According to an authentic published statement, it appears that in the year 1831, about 17,000 Sunday-school teachers and scholars were hopefully converted in the United States alone. In those nurseries of piety and virtue upon which the Lord "pours out the healthful spirit of his grace," many youthful servants of Jesus Christ are constantly being trained up for permanent and extensive usefulness in different departments of his vineyard; and not a few are called thence to glorify him by preaching the unsearchable riches of his grace to a dying world.

Go to the schools of the prophets, the theological seminaries, and see them filled with young men who, while receiving or imparting the lessons of a Sunday-school, felt constrained to manifest their love of Jesus by complying with his command, *Feed my sheep—feed my lambs!* Go to every charitable institution—to every missionary station under heaven; and you shall find among the faithful labourers at all of them, men

Number of teachers who became communicants in St. Peter's church,	- - - - -	113
Number of scholars do.	- - - - -	36
Many more are known to have become communicants in other denominations.		
Number of those once connected with the Male Sunday-school, ■ teachers or scholars, who have become ministers of the gospel,	- - - - -	7
Number of ditto now preparing for the ministry, so far known,	- - - - -	■

and women who devoutly bless God for the benefits derived from this heavenly system. I might say, go to the distant and lowly grave of *Bacon*, and while you shed your tears over the spot where his relics repose, I would remind you that the sacred and undaunted spirit which prompted him to brave the perils of the ocean, to breathe the air of pestilence, and lay down his life upon the shores of Africa, as a willing sacrifice to the cause of her afflicted children, and the glory of Christ, was, if not imbibed, at least, warmed and invigorated amidst the engagements of a Sunday-school.* Or, if you desire a living example, I might point you to *Morrison*, the apostle of China, who has translated the Bible and prayer book, several of the homilies, and other useful works into the difficult language of that immense empire, and thus opened the fountains of divine knowledge to its countless population—and remind you that he was once a Sunday-scholar. The time would fail me if I should attempt to recount the names of many others, who are now faithful bishops and pastors of the

* The Rev. Samuel Bacon, whose life fell — sacrifice to his benevolent efforts to establish the American colony on the coast of Africa, was — most ardent friend of Sunday-schools, and a most faithful and devoted labourer in this field of benevolence. On the 7th of August, 1817, there was established in York, Pennsylvania, where he then resided, — Sunday-school society, for the county—and on the 17th, — school was opened in the village with twenty-six scholars. In less than two years from that time, there were “thirty-three schools, employing about 220 teachers, and containing 2,200 scholars, within the county. These schools, with a few exceptions, were all the fruits of Mr. Bacon’s personal exertions, and owed much of their success and the interest which they held in the public mind, to his efficient superintendence.” Some men accomplish more in a few months than others of superior talents, and perhaps equal piety, are able to do in their whole lives.

church in this and other Christian countries—and of others still who are performing their self-denying labours as missionaries of the cross among the victims of superstition, or heathen ignorance, who received most important training for their holy work in the exercises of the Sunday-school.* I might direct your attention to almost every seminary of learning, to every association which has been formed for lessening the afflictions and promoting the happiness of mankind, and to every department of benevolent enterprise—and remind you that all are enriched with the fruits and adorned with the graces of this blessed system. All this might be done, but it is unnecessary. The eulogy of this system is written in living characters upon the face of Christendom. Every pious heart bears testimony to its excellence. Every virtuous tongue proclaims its praise. It has gathered its bloodless laurels, and erected the monuments of its glory in every land. It is identified with the cause of the gospel, and the best interests of the world. And while earth continues to be the scene of its beneficent operations, heaven is being filled with the fruits of them.

Do we desire to receive a more vivid impression of the usefulness of this system? Let us then for one moment reflect on what would be the probable consequences of its abolition. Suppose that all the Sunday-schools should be blotted from existence, how fearful, beyond description, would be the change in the moral condition and prospects of our race? It would roll back the history of the world for half a century, and erase

* It is said to have been ascertained that more than two thirds of the active officiating ministers of the gospel in England, and nine tenths of the missionaries to the heathen, became pious in Sunday-schools.

from its pages a record of the noblest exploits which have been achieved by faith and love since the apostolic age. It would restore the spirit of apathy, formality, and death, which rested like an incubus upon the bosom of the church—crushing her vitals, and almost stopping her breath—before that glorious revival of godliness which gave birth to this and its kindred institutions. It would revive the age of darkness. We cannot say, indeed, that it would blot out the sun of righteousness; for that would continue to exist and shine forth in all its brightness; but the church, which, like the moon, shines with borrowed light, would soon become dim and unable to reflect his lustre—and the lesser lumina ries of the spiritual firmament would be extinguished, leaving the world to all the horrors of starless midnight! To shut the Sunday-schools would be to dry up so many fountains of refreshing waters, and abandon the earth to moral sterility and desolation. Soon our theological seminaries would be deserted, for there would be no candidates for the sacred office. Our Bible and tract presses would be stopped for want of employment; and our foreign missionaries called home for want of support. The angel now flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to every nation, would be arrested in his course. In process of time, the temples of the living God would be converted into habitations for the beasts of the earth or the fowls of the air, and the inhabitants of Christendom itself be perishing for lack of knowledge. To break up this system, intimately connected as it is with all the operations of the church in the present age, would eventually put a stop to every wheel in the grand machinery of Christian benevolence. It would be to re-

move one of the most formidable barriers to the progress of ignorance and vice: and many generations would not pass away, before anarchy and despotism, infidelity and superstition, overflowing their present boundaries like torrents of burning lava, would pour a tide of desolation over the fairest portions of the globe—sweeping away by its resistless force all that is venerable in religion—all that is precious in civilization—all that is lovely in the institutions of social life.

If the benefits of the Sunday-school system are so unspeakably great, and the evils to be apprehended from its abolition or decline so infinitely tremendous, how powerful are its claims upon the charity and prayers of all the servants of God, and the friends of man! It is for those who sustain this character, to say, whether its energies shall be multiplied, and its march be onward, till its full victories are achieved by the accomplishment of the prophecy in the text, *all thy children shall be taught of the Lord.*

I say it belongs to Christians to decide whether the light of truth shall continue to extend its sway upon earth, or whether darkness shall again be permitted to contest its dominion—because there is no uncertainty as to the divine purpose in relation to it. *God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth*—and has given a commandment to his church to *go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.* If, then, the progress of the gospel shall at any time be impeded, or if it creeps with a feeble and sluggish pace on its pathway through the world, the fault lies not in any want of amplitude in its provisions, or any withholding of the gracious influence which is necessary to its success; but must be ascribed entirely to the un-

belief, or avarice, or indolence of the church. It is for Christians, on whom God has imposed the responsibility, to decide whether the river of life and salvation shall henceforth flow in a broader and deeper channel, or whether it shall be confined to its present limits—or perhaps creep along with a diminishing stream.

What then is your decision, my Christian brethren, in reference to that branch of evangelical effort which has been presented to our view this evening? Your answer has been already given, in the fervent petitions that have ascended to the throne of grace, *thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!* *Let the people praise thee, O God, yea, let all the people praise thee!* *Let thy way be known upon earth; thy saving health among all nations!*

The managers and friends of the American Sunday-school Union, so far from reposing upon their laurels, will press onward to new conquests. Their past success will serve only as an incentive to future exertion. May every kindred institution in the land, not in the spirit of unholy strife, but in the spirit of the Lord Jesus, seek to emulate your zeal, and, if possible, to surpass your labours! May the zeal, and liberality, and exertions of God's people of every name, continually increase, till every village on our mountains, and every hamlet in our valleys—throughout the length and breadth of our extensive country, shall be blessed with the hallowing influence of a Sunday-school!

But shall we feel that we have done our duty in this cause, after we have extended the means of religious education to the entire population of our own land? May we, even then, remit our labours, and look with indifference upon the ignorance and miseries of other

nations perishing for lack of knowledge? No! *The field is the world.* The object at which we must steadily aim is the conversion of its entire population: the subjection of all nations to the obedience of faith. Hear the command which God addresses to his church in the chapter before us. *Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitation: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes: for thou shalt break forth on the right hand, and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.*

The great contest between truth and error—holiness and corruption—the children of light and the principalities and powers of darkness—has not only been commenced, but is already approximating its glorious result. The Captain of the Lord's host has not only gone forth as a warrior fully equipped for the battle, but already, at least in the anticipations and hopes of his followers, victory perches upon his standard, and in his van marches salvation! “The present era,” says one of the most gifted and popular writers of the age, “may justly be deemed the day of hope for the gospel. No such singular conjunction of symptoms, throughout the world, has ever before invited the activity and zeal of Christians. And if the pressure of responsibility is at all times great upon them, in this behalf, it has acquired now a treble weight; inasmuch as it seems as if the antagonist powers were fast drawing off from the field. Looking out to the long and many-coloured array of ghostly domination, as it stretches its line across plains and hills, we discern movement—but it is the stir of retreat. Encampments are breaking up; barriers are trampled upon; standards are furled; the cla-

rion of dismay is sounded. This—this, then, is the hour for the hosts of the Lord to snatch their weapons, and be up!"*

While the trumpet of Zion sounds the summons to arms, and the note of preparation waxes louder and louder, who among us will not harness himself for the battle! Shall the friends and supporters of Sunday-schools linger in the rear, or press into the very front ranks of the army of light? I can anticipate but one answer from this assembly.—Every pious heart responds, "I will do my utmost to render institutions which the Lord has so eminently blessed, more efficient in the promotion of his glory!" Let Sunday-school Unions move on side by side with those kindred associations which are most forward and zealous in the missionary enterprise! Let your noble resolution to supply the great Valley of the Mississippi be followed up by the still nobler resolution to attempt furnishing a supply of the means of religious instruction for the entire population of the globe! Do we shrink away from the proposal as too mighty for our grasp? Then will it be left to men of another generation, and perhaps of another country, to see its feasibility and undertake its accomplishment. O! that will be the dawn of a brighter day than the world has ever seen. Then, the energies of the Sunday-school system shall be baptized with the spirit of missions! Then the burden of evangelizing the world will no longer be imposed upon the few ordained missionaries who can be spared from the necessities and supported by the charity of the churches; but wherever the heralds of salvation go they will be accompanied by lay brethren and sisters, who will be

helpers in their work, and sharers alike of their sorrow and their joy. We shall behold Christian men and women consecrating their fortunes and lives to the service of God—and, forsaking kindred, and home, and country to engage in the delightful work of gathering the scattered lambs of the Redeemer into his fold. *Many will run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.* We shall see private Christians traversing the wide domains of the false prophet, scattering light in their pathway—bearing the torch of truth into the most obscure retreats of superstition—and here and there establishing Sunday-schools and other seminaries of religious education, as so many radiating points of spiritual illumination amidst the midnight of the pagan world.

Then, wherever the missionary plants the standard of the cross, the Sunday-school will be planted by its side as a nursery for heaven. The one will react upon the other; and both will pour their concentrated radiance upon a benighted world, till the darkness of error and sin shall be removed from the face of the nations! Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *all thy children shall be taught of the Lord.* Then it shall no more be needful for a man to say to his neighbour, *know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least unto the greatest.*

An Appeal to Ministers of the Gospel in Behalf of Sunday-schools

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED

■ THE REQUEST OF THE BOARD OF MANAGERS OF THE AMERICAN SUNDAY
SCHOOL UNION,

PHILADELPHIA, MAY 19th, 1834.

BY ISAAC FERRIS,

PASTOR OF SECOND REFORMED PROTESTANT DUTCH CHURCH, ALBANY.

PHILADELPHIA:

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION
NO. 146 CHESTNUT STREET.

1834.

A SERMON.

“He saith unto him, feed my lambs.”—John xxi. 15.

THE context is undoubtedly to be ranked with the most interesting portions of the evangelists, and is justly regarded as furnishing invaluable instruction, both to the private and the official servant of Jesus Christ.

By many, the injunctions of our Lord here found are considered as noting ■ gradation in Christian character and attainment, and enjoining a corresponding apportionment of the minister's attention and care. That the Great Shepherd should direct attention to this, as his intercourse with his disciples was soon to close, and he was about to leave the flock under their care, cannot but be noticed as particularly appropriate, while the manner of doing it will be admired. The principle of discrimination in public duties here presented, if properly regarded, will secure both great comfort and success in the pastoral life.

But our text is also understood as calling attention to a large class of persons in every pastoral charge, who, from tenderness of years, are familiarly denominated the lambs of the flock. Assuming that this is ■ just view, the term “lambs” conveys ■ peculiar claim on our care, arising from tenderness, inexperience, and exposure; and that prefixed (“my”) gives

the duty enjoined a high degree of importance. Interests which Jesus Christ has made the subject of such special charge, persons in whom he claims such a propriety, cannot be disregarded without high offence.

We are all aware that this is by no means the only or the principal place where the duty of the religious education of youth is enjoined; but here, it is brought home to the minister as a specific duty. How far the church and her ministry have been faithful or unfaithful on this subject, we need not now particularly inquire. All are ready to acknowledge that the neglect has been by far too common, and that, in consequence, the interests of the lambs, and those of the church, and above all, the interests and honour of our divine Shepherd, have, as they are closely linked, all sadly suffered.

It is a gratification to know that a better day has dawned. The church, as a body, begins to feel and regret her inattention; the ministry have begun to awake, and a much more direct, powerful, and appropriate influence has been brought to bear on Christ's lambs, than has been for centuries witnessed; and its happy results are seen in the admission of an unusually large number of hopefully pious youth into the church; the Head of the church thus showing us, that when his people and ministry fall in with his economy, he gives the evidence of his approbation in the abundant blessings imparted.

For this increased and growing attention to the lambs of the church in this age, every one must acknowledge we are very largely indebted to the Sabbath-school institution. This blessed institution has constituted the fold of this interesting portion of our flocks; and presenting them before us, separated from

the mature and advanced, amid the crowds of whom they have been overlooked, the eye of the church has been kept on them with unwonted interest, until her compassion and sense of duty have been moved, and she has felt that her neglect was criminal, and that something must be done. But notwithstanding this, here we have a case where the pointed remark of the pious Richmond applies: "We are only half awake." And all are called upon, every member of the church and every minister, to awake thoroughly, and address themselves to the care of the lambs.

While Sabbath-schools have been so much the means of what has been done, they especially are before us, as the proper spheres of our labours for the youth. On the ground of this, it is proposed to make this anniversary discourse—*A PLEA for more direct and active co-operation on the part of ministers of the gospel, in the promotion of the Sabbath-school cause;* and it is hoped, that the selection of this, out of the many topics which suggest themselves on such an occasion, will not only be considered suited to this day, but adapted to the times.

It is assumed here that the ministry are friendly to this distinguished charity, and is this too much to assume? There may possibly be some ministers found who are doubtful as to its value, and, by much searching, a few who would lift their voices against it; but such a discovery can only call forth our pity, while the fact must be set down to their ignorance. But who, among the ministers, who *know* any thing on the subject, can be set down as unfriendly? Not one! It would be a libel on their ministerial character to affirm it. There are, undoubtedly, degrees of attachment,

or rather of active interest, but a friendly regard the ministry unquestionably have. The time was, in the infancy of the institution, when some of our best men hesitated, concerning its influence on the proper observance of the Lord's-day ; but that was a mist of the morning which has long since passed away. Now who can call up before his mind the picture of the immense congregation of nearly a million of youth gathered every Sabbath, to learn the way of salvation from the Book of God, every Sabbath brought in the arms of devotion to the Saviour's feet ; who can dwell on the twenty thousand hopeful conversions of teachers, and of thirty thousand scholars in the schools, composing the American Union ; who can notice the large accession of ministerial labourers which these schools have furnished ; who can trace the successful course of those distinguished missionaries, whose hearts were first warmed with love for perishing souls within the hallowed atmosphere of the Sabbath-school,—without feeling a thrill of grateful emotion that the institution was ever founded, and especially was founded in his day ? There is enough here, one would think, to move the coldest, to animate the most inefficient, and to induce every one to employ the whole weight of his influence in its favour, and to lay hold of this lever with his entire strength, and lift the world from its wretchedness. This is the point to which we would have every beloved brother in the ministry come, and to which it is fervently hoped the suggestions now to be made may aid in bringing him.

The FIRST REASON we urge for securing this active ministerial co-operation is this :—*That if ever this institution, already so efficient, accomplishes for so-*

ciety and the church what it is fitted for accomplishing, it must be effected materially, if not principally, through the influence of the ministers of the gospel.

The Sabbath-school system, as first introduced among us, was certainly very crude, and admitted of great improvement. Such improvement, however, could only be the result of experience. In the infancy of the experiment, no one could become counsellor to his neighbour; every man was under the necessity, so to speak, of going to school for himself. Yet even then the institution was pronounced blessed, being so much better than the very partial attention to youth which had preceded it. But when we compare the schools first known among us with those of 1834, how wide is the contrast, and how favourable to the present! We cannot but pronounce the present organization of Sunday-schools happy, as their form, their system, their course of instruction are adapted to a high degree of efficiency. It is delightful to trace the successive steps in this improvement; first came the confinement of the course of instruction to matters purely religious; then the removal of the objection, that "they were only for the poor," by the promiscuous introduction of pupils from every class in society, thus carrying the knowledge of Christ and him crucified, through the most interesting channels, into numberless families in the higher walks of life; then came the establishment of the library for the children's use, furnishing a rich supply of intellectual and spiritual food for the youthful mind, setting home the instructions of the school, and still further scattering its light; and finally was introduced the limitation of the lesson to a small selec-

tion of Scripture, that instead of the mere exercise of memory, every principle might be thoroughly understood, and distinctness and definiteness given to the impression, as each is brought home to the conscience. As the institution now lies before us, so highly improved, and gathering its materials from the class of society most ready to receive impressions, who does not recognise in it a machinery of prodigious power ; an instrumentality, calculated, even were no further improvements to be made, to exert an influence whose limits time cannot define ?

Now, in order to secure the most happy results, three things seem to be particularly called for. In the *first place*, a proper field to act on, i. e. the gathering into it all the children of an age suitable for instruction; in the *second place*, the supply of persons qualified to carry out the system ; and in the *third place*, the intelligent seizing on, and the skilful application of those suggestions for improvement which experience offers. Grant these things, and though what has been accomplished has been so gratifying, it will be but a speck compared with what shall be realized : this lever must, will move the social world.

To the inquiry to whom are we principally to look, in order to secure these things, we say, without hesitation, to the ministers of the gospel. It is not intended here, in the least, to undervalue the labours or influence of any other class of persons ; but, giving them all suitable honour, we do feel that it is left very much with the ministry to say whether these delightful prospects shall be realized ; to them is tendered the honour of bringing out in the fullest exercise all the capabilities of the Sabbath-school ; upon them is thrown the

responsibility of defining the limits of the blessedness it shall communicate.

This is taking high ground ; but we maintain it by referring to two things, viz. *the prevailing sentiment of the present experienced and most active friends of Sabbath-schools, and the influence and advantages natural to the ministerial relation.*

They who are actively engaged in the Sabbath-school service must be allowed to know what are the impediments in its way, and what it needs to give it complete success. They have struggled hard so far up an ascent, in some cases, of very rugged surface, and they have accomplished much, for the most part, with little more than good wishes and a general favouring countenance; and now they have arrived at a point—indeed this may be said to have been for some time the case—where they see the pressing need of having their pastors, and the ministers of Christ generally, put their hands to the work.

It is believed that this is very extensively felt by superintendents and teachers throughout our country. Their sentiment is, that Sabbath-schools will go on, and they will flourish, such is their hold on the public feeling ; but only give them the influence of the ministerial office, and they are ready not only to labour without ceasing, but almost to give a pledge for the most complete consummation of the hopes cherished. The judicious report adopted by the convention which met in May last cannot have been already forgotten. Its language is this : “ Resolved, That the direct influence and co-operation of the gospel ministry are indispensable to the complete success of Sunday-schools.”

The peculiar character of the ministerial relation is the foundation of this sentiment. From his situation, from the nature of his duties, and the subjects to which his attention is principally directed, the influence of the minister is naturally great in all matters of a religious character. The people look upon him as the guardian of their interests, and of those of their children; as their instructor on all that is to be believed or done. And if he enjoys only the degree of affection ordinarily felt for a pastor, whatever scale receives the weight of his influence will preponderate, and whatever undertaking he enlists in, for the promotion of the public good, goes on, for the most part, with success. And it is only for him to employ the common influence of his station, and he gives an impetus to the Sabbath-school cause of a most blessed character. Let him take hold of this work, and his example and remarks will place it high in the affections of his people; and the result will be, they will rally around it, they will esteem it a privilege as well as a duty to send their children, the place of meeting will be filled, teachers will be animated, and all things will advance with new interest. This can be accomplished by no other man or class of men, as none have the confidence of the people in the same way. Who that has attempted this matter has not found his success to sustain our remarks? Where is the minister who has settled in a charge where the Sabbath-school was low, who has not, when he embarked in its favour, seen it revive, the work go on with spirit, and children, teachers, and the church blessed? We conceive the cases of failure will be few indeed, and in these some other unhappy causes will be found to prevail. Congrega-

tions — naturally expect their ministers to lead the van in every good work, that as he leads, in this matter at least, they have been found ready to follow.

And if improvements are to be made, in order to give greater effect to the Sunday-school system, who rather than the intelligent pastor should see, and with the actual labourers, introduce and turn them to account? From his situation, he can calmly observe the machinery in operation, and mark the movement of every part. His acquaintance with men of every grade enables him to see what is necessary for the best effect in any given case, or in particular circumstances. And he has access to means of information almost peculiar to his place, so that he may submit, on the earliest occasion, whatever is found elsewhere to be for the advantage of the cause.

How admirable ! how peculiar his advantages for properly training his auxiliaries, the teachers. Allowing much for the faithful use of all the facilities commonly within the reach of the teacher, there is constant need of the more extensive knowledge of the pastor. He has the benefit of a disciplined mind ; access to the stores of sacred literature in his own and other languages ; understands the use of his many helps : while he has it thus in his power to aid, to him the teacher must look for much altogether out of the reach of his own means.

Here are facilities, naturally connected with and peculiar to the ministerial office, precisely what Sabbath-schools require for their aid ; facilities, whose use in their behalf is earnestly solicited by the labourers in their service ; facilities which, if employed for them, will bring out their full power on the best inte-

rests of society and the church. Beloved brethren, can we, can any one contemplate these facilities without feeling that there is a responsibility of the most solemn character here, a responsibility to give our influence as desired ?

Is it not just then to say that it is left with us in a measure to decide how great a blessing Sabbath-schools shall become? that we have the hearts of the people to an extent in our keeping on this point? Now the whole host of Sabbath-school teachers look to us, they make their appeal to us on this occasion, the church waits for us in this matter; shall we, can we sit still or look on with cold indifference? Shepherds of Israel! shall we not heed the charge of Him who placed us in commission? "Feed my lambs." O let us remember that if ever this institution, already so blessed, has its capabilities perfectly developed, it will, it must be materially, if not principally, through our co-operation.

Our SECOND REASON for ministerial co-operation is, that *Sabbath-schools furnish to our hand the best means of benefiting the most interesting portion of our charges.*

Of the classes composing a pastoral charge, all have strong and equal claims on our attention, and none can be neglected without injury. Of these our youth constitute a large portion, a class in which nearly one-third are found, and this confessedly of most interesting character, as it contains the germ of the church, all the materials for sustaining and promoting the interests of religion, as the fathers pass away. While decided and special regard for their right culture is acknowledged to be an indispensable duty, in order to see

the worth of Sabbath-schools, as auxiliaries in its discharge, we must refer to the system which preceded them. Allowing our youth to receive the degree of attention formerly common, to what will it amount ? to what did it amount ? what care was taken to prepare the materials for the place they were to occupy in the great social and ecclesiastical edifice ? Here is a field of reflection which cannot be traced without pain, and yet it is one on which few have suffered their minds to rest long and seriously. With all the acknowledgments of the importance of moulding the character when young, and especially of the duty of the church through her officers and pastors to her children, they have been most sadly overlooked. What has been the ministerial or pastoral contact with them ? what sermons are or have been preached for their particular benefit each year ? what, in the ordinary strain of preaching, is adapted to them, or can be received by them ? What religious instruction does the church give them ? We have our catechetical classes, and these we speak of with interest ; but even in these, what is the description of books from which it is proposed to teach the elements of religion ? Are they plain, familiar, interesting, captivating to the young, or are they dry and technical ? How often have these classes been attended ? has it been oftener than once in the week, and the recitations not longer than three-quarters of an hour ; and these, in very many cases, interrupted for weeks in succession, and often given up for several months in the year at particular seasons ? And while attending these, has it not been, on the part of the youth, with the feeling that the whole was a drudgery, and a tax upon that

time, which, after the confinement of the week in school, they esteemed fairly their own for recreation ? Now, under what amount of the proper description of influence do they come ? And then, when making the pastoral visit to the families of his charge, how often does the minister find the younger members at home ? what opportunities do such visits, when as frequent as the most faithful minister can make them, furnish for instilling religious truth into the minds of youth ?

But in order to view this subject fully, we must go further. While thus the youth are without a proper pastoral influence, under what do they grow up ? Is not that with which they are most in contact,—which fills their minds and occupies their hearts,—of a character to make them worldly, and confirm the evil propensities of human nature ? Let us look at these things carefully, and say whether it is to be wondered at that so many of our youth have grown up without the fear of God, and wedded to the world, and that, when adults, the ministry labour with them so much in vain ? The truth is, the ministry have laboured to a great disadvantage. The world and the devil have had far the advance ; they have fitted and moulded the heart, so that a great part of the minister's work subsequently consists in removing impediments, and he must study every art even to secure attention. Surely the natural state is sufficiently bad, without giving from fourteen to eighteen of the best years of life for forming the character to the direct and almost unchecked control of evil influences.

Such was the former order of things, and an order which certainly could not exist without pain to the

heart of a faithful servant of God. Here it is Sabbath-schools come in delightfully to our aid. We are unspeakably indebted to a kind Providence for them, as supplying a defect so glaring as that contemplated, and affording the best means of meeting all evil influences on fair ground, and with a reasonable hope of counter-acting them. What are the facts presenting themselves in favour of the Sabbath-school? Through his Sabbath-school the pastor has opportunities of personal contact and intercourse with the youthful part of his charge, heretofore unknown. *Here is gathered for our moulding a greater mass of mind* than any former plan collected, and an opportunity is given for acting on it, mediately and immediately, under the most gratifying circumstances. Here, instead of *forty or fifty* youth of both sexes, out of a large youthful population, the minister has several hundreds growing up under his hand. And while the mass of mind is greater, so the influence will be *happier and more effectual*. Let the minister sustain the Sabbath-school with all his heart; let him labour and pray for and visit it, as his nursery, as his auxiliary in the Lord's work; let him labour to furnish his teachers with ample qualifications for their departments; and he will give a most happy tone to the instruction imparted, and will secure and perpetuate the knowledge of all which he deems essential in truth and order. And this work will go on *regularly*; it will be as much the subject of expectation and calculation as the return of the Sabbath; the instruction will come as the unceasing dropping of water, unaffected by those occasional circumstances which under the old system prevented every minister from being regular in his even limited attention to the young,

and thus every week, and month, and year, in their onward course, will bear witness to the undeviating tenor of this Sabbath-day effort. Let us not forget here the *manner* in which instruction is given ; there is nothing of forbidding formality in it ; there are no circumstances which awe into silence the inquisitiveness of youth, that source of unspeakable profit, if properly guided ; nothing to make him cry, “what a weariness :” all is done in a way to excite an avidity for the place of instruction and the instruction itself ; all is brought down to his grade of mind, and made to meet his every-day feelings and circumstances. The thoughts and feelings become occupied with the instruction, both within and out of the scene of duty, and the influence of the lessons taught is thus almost constant. And what a range is taken naturally in carrying out the system : its field of principles is commensurate with truth, and every part in its place is regarded and set up before the mind in its peculiar importance. And here it corrects a most serious defect in our catechetical course, as instead of the mere committing to memory of abstract truths, it carries them out in all their extent of application. The catechisms in popular use are many of them admirable ; and they who consider them the relic of an age to be forgotten, and behind the refinement of our day, should look well to the fact, that no age has been so distinguished for catechisms of every branch of human knowledge as our own refined and enlightened age ; and that some of the most intelligent and learned have been devoted to the preparation of them. The defect is not in the use of catechisms, but in the confinement of the learner to them. In order to derive full advantage from them,

our youth must see the principles of these summaries carried and presented in their various connexions ; and while, as we have remarked, this is accomplished in the Sabbath-school, it is the only place where it can be done so happily.

Now, judging from the known results of influence, in any degree parallel to this we have sketched, what are we warranted in expecting ? As it respects the *truth*, will it not be deeply lodged in the mind ? will not memory be stored with it, and conscience take of these stores, now to check, to reprove, to direct, and again to animate and confirm ? May we not confidently expect that the direct rays of truth, poured in one constant stream on the heart, will prove a source of blessing ? How delightfully will the youth be led ! what barriers against the world will be set up ! what precious spiritual fruits may we hope to see ! Youth has been appropriately denominated the spring-time of life. If instead of waiting to break up the soil, and sow when the time for gathering our harvest has arrived, we shall break up and sow in the season nature points out, when the soil is soft and easily moved, and readily receives what is committed to it,—what may we not look for from Him who is the God of nature and grace, and who has remarkably sealed his approbation to efforts for the young ?

And as respects the *minister*, besides the present direct action on the mind of the young, has he not laid the foundation for usefulness with them in maturer years, by securing early their affection and confidence ? Instead of choosing to be at an awful distance from him, the feeling grows with their growth and strengthens with increasing years, that their minister loves

them, and is their best friend. His animating voice, his occasional address, cheer them in study and make them emulous of success. As the sheep the shepherd's so they know his voice, and as he comes among them, the expression of gratified feeling passes from countenance to countenance, and all is solemn, fixed attention, as he impresses what has been taught, and points them to heaven. They cling to him with something of a filial regard, and eagerly look forward to the time when they may come under his personal instruction. Look forward—the period when they cease to think of themselves as children, and are passing into manhood and womanhood, while they are yet inexperienced, and their characters are not confirmed, must be pronounced the most critical in their course; but how happily will the minister have prepared for it. He will have attained such a hold on their affections, as will afford the most cheering hope that they may be saved from the vortex ready to swallow them. And even down into the prime of life the effect of his care must be felt. In the season when most men begin to break up the soil, he will be gathering his fruits; he will be rejoicing as he gathers to hear from their lips how early they were impressed, how his counsel kept them from going astray, how they owe it to him, under God, that they are now heirs of the kingdom. Happy man! he will rejoice to see the early sown seed yielding, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.

It is honestly believed this is not exciting hopes too high, but that a reference to cases of actual occurrence will fully sustain what has been said.

What other system presents such delightful opportunities and prospects to a minister of Christ, desiring

to discharge his duty to the children and youth of his charge, we think all will answer—not any. We can come then only to one conclusion. By all the importance so justly attached to the proper moulding of the youthful character, by all the difficulty now experienced in combatting the prejudices and overcoming the evils which unchecked worldliness has been for years confirming ; by the pain now felt in seeing youth, at the time they most need counsel, rush into the arms of temptation ; by all the toils now undergone, and often hopelessly, in attempts to draw within a proper influence, in mature years, those whose youth has been neglected ; while we bless God for this institution, we are called upon to avail ourselves of it to *feed the lambs of Christ.*

A THIRD REASON for active ministerial co-operation is, that *it will afford the strongest assurance of raising up labourers in numbers, and of a character to meet the exigencies of the times.*

Action is the order of our day, and it is to be regarded as a most happy circumstance that this is the fact. Too long have Christians lived as though they had nothing to *do* for their Master and the world, and as though Christianity consisted in seeking their own comfort and living for themselves. We hail the present as a better day. The feeling is becoming more prevalent, that every member of the church is bound to a life of active service in promoting the interests of religion and the salvation of the world.

But even here we are not without ground of fear ; as we are in danger of having action without intelligence, without scriptural knowledge. And the danger of having religion injured, by the injudicious steps of

the unenlightened, increases in proportion as the field of action widens, and as activity becomes popular. There are so many animating circumstances in our times, so much urging forward necessarily employed, that many a heart is warmed to attempt something, and not having enjoyed the benefit of proper culture, is carried beyond its depth. Apparent success for a season emboldens, feeling carries before judgment, and injuries follow not easily repaired. Now we know there is much to be done, and the work of the Lord *must* go on, men must be urged to activity notwithstanding the evils of which we speak, and at the same time every means must be employed to fill the ranks with intelligent labourers, with persons whose minds are richly furnished with the truths and principles of the word of God ; men who know their place, and while they labour will be careful not to sacrifice the beautiful carved work and the order of the house of God to their zeal. When it is considered how lamentably defective in Scripture knowledge a very large part of the professors of religion of our day are, it is a subject of gratitude to the great King of Zion that He has so kept his church. And while we rely on Him in the employment of all reasonable guards and needed preventives, we do almost instinctively look to the well conducted Sabbath-school as affording them. In this nursery of the Lord we may fondly expect to raise a host in all respects qualified for His service—hands that will carry forward the ark of the Lord most safely and successfully.

While this may be remarked in general, there are several points on which ministers should look with intense interest, and which lead them directly to the Sabbath-school.

One of these points is, the importance of raising intelligent laymen, who shall come forward in active duty, and relieve the ministry of some of the burdens which now oppress them.

Every servant of Christ will subscribe to the apostle's doctrine, that he should be instant in season and out of season. If he be fit for the ministerial office, he will be a working man. But then there is a wide difference between this and his being loaded with so many burdens that he must fail under them. It is conscientiously believed, that the burdens of the minister are, in the American churches, altogether disproportionate, and exceed those of any other profession, and that many of them are extraneous to this office as constituted by Christ, or merely incidental. And as he is but flesh and blood, he cannot stand the pressure ; and no doubt these accumulated burdens, thrown upon him by the times and the state of the church, have much to do in the frequent painful failures in the prime of life. Contemplate a moment the field of ministerial duty : here is *preaching* to be attended to, twice at least every Sabbath, and once during the week ; this is to be regarded as the *primary* and most important part of his work, and in order to meet the intelligence of the day, and be worthy the place the Head of the church has assigned it, it must be distinguished for thought, investigation, originality, variety, intelligence, all which require much study and careful preparation, and make it a most exhausting draft on the mind : then the *sick*, varying constantly in number and in claims, must be visited frequently, and the *dead* must be interred, and to a very great extent in country parishes, accompanied by a sermon : an entire pastoral

charge is to be regularly *visited*, *at least, once each year*: *social meetings* must be, from time to time, attended, and these increased in seasons of special interest: *Bible-classes* for both sexes must be met weekly: all the *public charities*, and they are not a few in our day, are to receive particular attention; indeed each, if we listen to their friends and many agents who visit us, is to be sustained as if it were an exclusive object of regard: then the minister, to sustain himself, must keep pace with the literature of the day: he must be the president of one board of trustees, member of another, and principal actor in a third: his days must be interrupted by calls, and his evenings occupied with business: then there are ecclesiastic appointments to be fulfilled, which require frequently long journeys: and though last, not least, however sadly overlooked, his domestic concerns must not be neglected. Now what must be the result where a man is thus driven and harassed? His whole life is a hurry; duties are crowded one upon the other, to the injury of all; the most important part of his work, that of the pulpit, from hurried preparation becomes tame, common-place, or declamatory; he is worn down with anxiety; he is old in constitution and infirmities, when he ought to be in his vigour, and he scarcely passes the thirtieth year of his age before he must go on jaunts in pursuit of health, or change his pastoral relation, so as to rely for some years at least on past preparations. Here, it is believed, we have a mere matter of fact; does it not call for some relief? I know there are various speculations about the dietetics and exercise of ministers, and to much that is said importance is to be attached; but let all be tried, and it will be found

that they will not give constitutions to bear unreasonable burdens, or minds of inexhaustible faculties, nor keep the cheek from being furrowed, or the frame from sinking ; nor will they, while the current of public feeling flows in its present channel, shelter him from unkind thrusts and the charge of unfaithfulness, and of seeking his own comfort, or of becoming secular, who devotes a few hours in the week to exercise. Something more is necessary ; a remedy which shall relieve the minister of what only incidentally belongs to him, and place it in other suitable hands, while he, devoting himself to legitimate duties, shall be enabled to give them the highest possible tone and character, and spread out his usefulness over many years ; a remedy, in a word, which shall keep the ministerial office within the line of duty in which we find it in primitive days. If this be so, the question is, how shall the relief be obtained ? We think but one answer can be given ; we must raise up a people who will come to our aid ; the rising generation must be in training, and be prepared for carrying forward, with merely ministerial counsel, what is now thrown into ministerial hands for execution. We are then brought at once to the Sabbath-school, as the means of all others the most happy for effecting this desirable end. This, indeed, is our only hope ; if we fail here, we know not where to look. But is it in the least probable that we shall fail ; may we not take confidence from the fact that very many of those, who now divide the labour in the various departments of doing good, were reared and moulded in the Sabbath-school ?

Another point of great moment is, the filling the offices of the church with men whose minds are

furnished with rich stores of divine truth, and who, combining a high degree of intelligence and piety, shall be able stewards of spiritual things with the pastor. As far as we know, there exists, in all denominations, a class of men who, from their situation, are the auxiliaries of the pastor, constitute his board of counsellors, and with him take the oversight of the flock. The existence of such a class of men is to be regarded as a most happy feature in church organization, and whenever "well appointed," cannot but prove of immense service. Regarded by the people as belonging to themselves, they have free and familiar access where the minister can scarcely enter; hearts will be unbosomed to them that would have been sealed in perfect silence before him; they have springs perfectly under their command which he cannot touch; through them he may labour with admirable effect, and, availing himself of their knowledge, direct his personal efforts to the points where he may be most useful. Their place is most important, their opportunities of influence very great, and all these make it desirable that they should be men of the first order of Christian intelligence and piety. That there are many men well fitted for it occupying this office throughout our country, it is a happiness to acknowledge; but the number is small compared with what is needed; small compared with the very many plain, good men filling the offices, who have their piety to recommend them, but possess little more than the alphabet of religious knowledge, and are consequently negative in the

church. Many new churches have been organized in our country within a few years, and in setting them up, it has been necessary to take such materials as were at hand. And, in the older churches, how few will be found who do not constantly need the leading hand of the minister ; how few, who, in dispensing discipline, can take charge of any but the plainest cases ; who can go among the ignorant and instruct them ; who can sit down with the doubting and those whose minds have been warped by errorists, and explain the subjects of doubt, and remove their difficulties; in whose intercourse and advice with the inquiring soul, the minister has confidence ? Happy, thrice happy he, who has in these offices an Aaron and a Hur to sustain his hands. If we had now the means of properly filling this office with men fully caparisoned for, and who should promptly address themselves to their work, the whole church would be renovated ; religion would assume a new and more engaging aspect, the chariot wheels would roll on in delightful course. But where shall we get them ? It is a blessed fact that God is furnishing many choice aids through the precious revivals with which we are favoured. But though revivals may consecrate professional talent, they do not give the description of mental training, the Bible knowledge, and the deep experience which is needed. Yes, we have no hope of seeing these offices suitably filled except through that institution, which, while it raises a higher order of Christians, will also furnish a higher order of labourers. A youth who has passed through a Sabbath-school as a pupil ; who has had his mind thoroughly imbued with Scripture knowledge, who has subsequently had the disci-

pline of the place of a teacher, and there learned to explain and impress the word of truth in all its just proportions ; and in his visits to youth and families, of all descriptions, has acquired a knowledge of human nature, and of the means of gaining access everywhere, and drawing the attention and the affections ; one to whom habits of activity have become a second nature ; he is the man for such an office. Just in proportion as we can raise such men, the ministry will have their Aarons and their Hurs. The Sabbath-school will be to these officers what the theological seminary is to the minister.

Oh if this had been felt years since, and attention given accordingly to Sabbath-schools, what efficient lay aid should we be enjoying at this time ? Yet as it is now, how much are we indebted to the Sabbath-school.

A third point of commanding interest is, the supply of suitable persons as candidates for the ministry. In our own country how far is the population in advance of all our efforts to send forth preachers ! The estimate is familiar to all, that five thousand men are required to supply the present destitution, and this a destruction existing principally in a portion of our country which will in a few years control the destiny of these United States. And how are we falling behind every day ! Every day a congregation of upwards of a thousand souls is added to our population, — rapid is our increase : but how far are we from multiplying the ministry in proportion. And how appalling the prospect abroad ! less than eight hundred missionaries from all Christendom for six hundred millions ! Oh ! who will go for us ? whom shall we

send? Great is the harvest, but where are the labourers? Sabbath-schools, it is well known, have contributed ■ large proportion to the increased number of young men who have, within a few years, given themselves to the ministerial service at home and abroad; and they will, without a doubt, if properly cherished, in time to come furnish many more. While unanimity of sentiment on this point removes the necessity of dwelling on it, it cannot but be remarked, in this connexion, for the encouragement of pastors in labouring for them, that the young men brought forward through their instrumentality have decided advantages above most others:

Here the best foundation is laid for profiting by the exercises of a theological seminary. It is well known that among the circumstances which retard the early course of many theological students, their unacquaintance with the sacred Scriptures is to be particularly noticed. Very many who prepare for the ministry are recent converts; they have given themselves to other reading, or they come reeking from other pursuits; they are consequently ignorant of the Bible, have not read ten chapters in it, probably, for years before they became alarmed for their spiritual condition, and could not answer the plainest questions concerning the New Testament. In the ardour of first love, they look to the ministry, and having received some general preparatory literary education, in six months from the time of their conversion they are in a theological seminary, or near its portals. They hear lectures, in which much of Scripture is quoted, and, in passing, explained, and in which much of a plain character is assumed by the professor, ■ he is not ■

teacher of catechumens of twelve years old ; now, how can they properly appreciate and profit by what they hear ? Some time will elapse before they can readily turn over their Bibles in pursuit of a reference, and learn the use and value of a concordance, and much more before they attain a general familiarity with the volume of revelation. All this is a serious impediment. Young men have felt it, and been ready to acknowledge, that in consequence, at the close of their first year, they were just fitted to begin.

He who comes from the Sabbath-school has here far the advantage. Suppose many of the youth now in our Sabbath-schools become pious ; that they have taken a complete course of instruction ; in season have become teachers, and have the reading of the Scriptures and the drilling inseparable from such a course for years ; when they enter the theological seminary, the Bible is far from being a new book ; very much of a general character, and not a few of its details, are indelibly imprinted on their minds ; they have compared its parts ; have seen Scripture illustrated by Scripture ; have encountered its difficulties ; know where light is needed ; they see how the remarks of a professor apply ; not an incidental explanation is lost ; and thus in entering a seminary, they enter a college, where the instruction imparted is of a higher order indeed, but the second part of what they have already acquired.

The candidate from the Sabbath-school, while he has a better basis laid, *has also knowledge, on several branches, in advance of the instruction of the seminary.* Those now in the ministry well remember how their first year was laboriously occupied in acquir-

ing Jewish Antiquities, Scripture Analysis, and a few facts (only a small portion) of Ecclesiastical History. Now look at the Sabbath-school system, with its apparatus of Question Books, Bible Dictionary, Jewish Antiquities, Illustrations of Jewish and ancient manners and customs, Sacred Geographies and Maps, Ecclesiastical Histories, Bible Companions and Teachers' Classes. Only let these be faithfully employed, and what will be the effect ; almost the first year of a theological course will be anticipated. Where is the minister who has not observed that many things, in acquiring which, in the first year of his study, he felt himself becoming wise, are now with Sabbath-school children, of ten and twelve years of age, common and familiar as household matters. If the ministry will only faithfully manage this great institution, they cannot but place their Sabbath-school young men far in the advance, and they materially aid our theological professors, who would doubtless be happy to be mere examiners on first principles, while their researches were extended to higher matters. The work of the ministry is so momentous, and the period for preparation so brief, that every thing which gains time for extensive reading and research, and for studying great subjects in detail, and laying up rich materials for future use, is a real and great blessing to a young man.

And the pastor cannot but place a high estimate on the *habits of activity and the practical character acquired* by the engagements of the Sabbath-school. He knows well how much in his pursuits, as a theological student, tempted him to relax in the cultivation of warm, earnest piety ; how much there was to enervate holy energy in acquiring the science of reli-

gion, and travelling over the vast field of theological speculation, and poring over the researches of the mere scholar. He can appreciate then any means of guarding against these tendencies, and for preserving the piety of his young friends from a lethargic state. Now all the pursuits of the Sabbath-schools, we think, do this most happily ; such habits of pious activity are formed, that a man feels it important to his enjoyment to be similarly employed ; or if not, the savour of former engagements long influences him ; and his previous Christian comfort in them furnishes a subject of frequent reflection, and a test of his state. He has from his previous course the prospect of retaining much glow of feeling, and carrying with him a check against a cold satisfaction with mere science or speculation or dry research. And as he looks forward to his labours in the vineyard, with what views and feelings and habits can he, with more promise, go forward, than those of the Sabbath-school ? Now while it is believed that the Sabbath-school institution will furnish a larger number of candidates for the ministry of reconciliation, it is evident that in giving it their influence, those now in the ministry are performing a most important service to the young men who are to be their coadjutors and their successors in the sacred office.

Another point of incalculable moment is, the bringing forward of the church and nominal Christendom to the accomplishment of the great work of our day. Our times, as they respect the conversion of the world, are momentous. When we observe how extensively the way is being prepared for the downfall of the pagan systems which have long enslaved hun-

dreds of millions—how many in most important sections of the world are now ready to adopt some new system ; when we observe how remarkably the door has been opened for the gospel, how the missionary enterprise has been blessed, how the great Captain of salvation has gone before us, who does not feel that this is the golden period for effort ; that now, if ever, the church should rise in her strength, quadruple her charities, pour in her hundreds of missionaries, sustain them at every important political centre in every country, and by one united effort meet her Lord's will so long neglected, preach the gospel to every creature, and set up the monuments of her fidelity and benevolence in every hamlet throughout the world ?

But when we turn from the distant field, to observe the disposition of the church at home, the supineness of the majority of her members, the limited views of many more, and the comparatively heavy manner in which her arrangements move on, how much is there to dishearten and make the soul sad ? We may well agitate it as quite a problem how the work of evangelizing the world is to be accomplished, in order to justify the sentiments which have prevailed concerning the introduction of the latter day glory. So far we have had to contend with all the difficulties attendant on a new work ; every step in advance has been gained by dint of effort, and through a multiplication of appeals, entreaties, and apparatus, the necessity for which reflects most unfavourably on the church's claim to love for her Head and for the world. There are some noble, enlarged hearts now engaged, worthy of primitive day ; but with the majority of professors, how hard has been the controversy with their igno-

rance, with their prejudices, and with their covetousness ! And what have we gained ? Compare the treasury reports of our missionary societies with the number of members in the denominations which have engaged in missions, and with their pecuniary means, and astonishment must be the result. The truth is, the greatest difficulties in the way of efficient action are now in *the church itself*. After all that has been said and done, she has yet to learn that Christianity is *essentially missionary*; she has yet to learn that her most glorious and acceptable offering is to lay the world, conquered by truth, at her Lord's feet.

From appearances, the difficulties now felt are likely to continue ; indeed, we cannot expect the work to go on with proper *impetus* until the church is brought back to the primitive feeling, until the propagation of the gospel is made a common Christian duty. She must accordingly hail that as a most blessed instrumentality, by which this may be effected. That the Head of the church could at once effect this, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we all believe ; but that we are to seek it, through the use of means, we also all believe. Now to the inquiry what means may we principally employ, we answer the Sabbath-school. Let the ministry direct their influence to this point ; let the children of the church be brought into this institution, so that in a few years we may say our churches are filled from it, and we have the strongest encouragement that we shall attain the object of pursuit. Let us try only the ordinary means, that is, that of frequent appeals, and give all the effect to these which a Martyn or ■ Gordon Hall would give, and we grant you will accomplish much ; but it will only

be for the time, and your work is to be done over on every occasion when you need funds, and the same struggle is to be gone through (and often with the same individuals) with ignorance, with prejudice, and especially with covetousness. But, my brethren, nurse your Sabbath-schools; fill them with the youth of your charges; carry out fully there the principles of this sacred charity; let the cultivation of benevolent feelings receive attention according to its importance; let the enlarged views on the subject of living for the good of the world, as presented especially in the New Testament, be indelibly impressed; let the wretchedness of the world without the gospel, as there most affectingly exhibited, and as confirmed by facts, be spread before the mind, and, as it were, kept there; above all, let the heavenly mission of our blessed Redeemer be set up before the mind, in all its benevolence and graciousness, as our model; pursue this through the years occupied in the Sabbath-school, as pupils, as teachers, as members of Bible-classes, and what must, with the ordinary blessing of God, be the result? You will send into our congregations and churches, you will people our land, with thousands and tens of thousands of practical friends of our Bible, tract, and missionary societies, and of every benevolent institution. You anticipate the benumbing, contracting influence of this world. You send out men whose knowledge, and views, and feelings will be up to the times. You set in motion ten thousand springs, which become almost endlessly the causes of action to others. In judging what may be the amount of their influence and action, let us look to the fact, that if our schools are thus filled, they contain the germ of

society and of the church ; and that, in ■ few years, the members of them will compose our active, enterprising merchants and artizans ; that the posts of honour and influence, to a considerable extent, will be occupied by them, and that the control of our civil and religious interests will, in a sense, be in their hands. To what delightful anticipations do these things naturally lead ? What an unspeakably blessed day will that be for the church, when her sons and her daughters shall come into her service, after having drunk in, in their earliest years, the spirit of Bible benevolence, and continued to draw from the divine fountain until mature years ! What a blessed day for the world !

Beloved brethren ! do we love the cause of benevolence ? do we rejoice in the wide door opened for the gospel abroad ? do we grieve that there are so few who hear the cry “ come over and help us ? ” do we long to see the work of giving the gospel accomplished in our day ? are we ready to give our personal effort to the work of awakening every Christian to his duty in the matter ? Then let us come, with hearts and hands united, to the aid of the Sabbath-school ; this bids to be our best help, this promises under God to furnish us the pleasure we seek in the triumph of the everlasting gospel.

Happy should I be in the privilege of tracing these thoughts further, but time admonishes of the necessity of coming to a close, and that an apology is due to you for so long a detention. Honoured by the Board of the American Sunday-school Union with being their organ on this occasion, I felt I could do no less than confirm the appeal I proposed to make, by presenting

somewhat at large the strong considerations the subject naturally suggests. If the positions taken be correct, do they not make the course of duty plain and inviting ? What ! my brethren ! have we ministers of the gospel the principal means of aiding this institution (which has already brought so much glory to our Master) in pouring a richer and wider stream of blessings upon the church and the world ? Is it presented to our hand as an auxiliary in our own work ? Does it promise to secure, with God's blessing, the dearest of all objects, the conversion of the world ? Is not here enough to call out our warmest gratitude, and induce us at once to "rise and build ?"

My reverend fathers and brethren, let me in the name of the whole body of teachers and superintendents of Sabbath-schools, in the name of this Union, in the name of the church, in the name of Jesus Christ our Great Shepherd, let me solicit for the subject of this appeal your most solemn reflections. We have between eight and nine thousand ministers, of protestant denominations, in our country ; if each should feel this subject, and "have a mind to work," how delightful would be the returns of another year ! how increasingly joyous each succeeding year !

And now may we all have the satisfaction of gathering precious youth into the kingdom, through every year of our ministry ; and on earth and in heaven, as we see the triumphs of grace over those who have been under our care, may we know how exquisite the happiness of having faithfully fed *the lambs of Christ.*
AMEN.

The Influence of the Gospel upon the intellectual Powers.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED

IN THE CENTRAL CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,

MAY 25, 1835.

BY REV. GEORGE W. BLAGDEN,
OF BOSTON, MASS.

■ ■ ■ SIXTH OF A SERIES OF ANNUAL SERMONS PREACHED ■ ■ ■
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A SERMON.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”—Ps. cxi. 10

THE subject to which I ask your attention, and which will be found in the sequel to flow legitimately from the words just read, is the importance of cultivating the heart or moral feelings of a people, more than their intellect; and the argument, thence arising, for the encouragement and support of Sabbath-schools.

There can be no doubt that the mere intellect of man can do much for his temporal happiness and usefulness, although his moral feelings may be left, in a great degree, to run to waste, like the weeds of a sluggard's garden. It is questionable, however, whether this could do much for his permanent good, without some indirect influence of a moral kind, to preserve and invigorate it. Certain it is, that it has accomplished very little in his behalf, except in circumstances where you can clearly trace the operation of moral causes, scattering some rays of the light of truth on his otherwise bewildering path. In Egypt, Greece, and Rome, those great and polished nations of antiquity, the influence of moral principles derived indirectly from the Bible, has been clearly traced; and it was only while such principles exerted a degree of power that their learning existed; while, in modern times, it is only where the religion of Christ has produced some

of its legitimate effects that the mind of man is enlightened and enlarged. Wherever this is not the case, it is darkened and contracted.

Nevertheless, men have been so prone to overlook this truth, that they have attributed the most of their achievements to the power of intellect alone ; and even in Christian lands, hitherto, there has been a marked and wonderful tendency to give to its cultivation an undue and dangerous prominence over the education of the heart.

Anticipating this dangerous tendency, the Scriptures, in a very remarkable manner, warn us against its influence ; declaring, at one time, that he who increases merely intellectual knowledge, increases sorrow ; at another, they warn the wise man not to glory in his wisdom, but rather to glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth the Lord. Solomon, after surveying all the things that are done under the sun, arrives at the conclusion, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit where there is not piety ; and that to fear God and keep his commandments, is the whole duty of man. And, in the text, David affirms that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom : A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.”

By the fear of the Lord, here mentioned, I understand not a slavish dread, but a holy reverence for Jehovah ; producing in all who exercise it, proportionable sorrow for sin, and a heartfelt desire and endeavour to return to his favour by repentance, and works meet for repentance, in any way of restoration it may please him, in mercy, to provide. Of course, therefore, this fear is experienced in its true nature, however weak in degree, in the first act of heartfelt

sorrow for sin, and repentance and faith exercised by the true Christian. So that the comparatively ignorant, as well as the learned man, can enjoy its blessings, because it is principally a matter of moral feeling; only requiring in the subject of it, conscience and reason to be convicted of sin against law, and realize the necessity of pardon.

The wisdom, of which this fear is declared to be the commencement, may be defined to be the application of the best means for the accomplishment of the best ends, whether in intellectual or moral concerns. But, as such an appropriate use of means can be manifested only where there is knowledge adequate to their selection and employment, I consider the fact, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, to involve the truth that it is also essential to useful knowledge. That this was the meaning of the writer of the text, would seem to be evident from what he immediately adds, as explanatory of its sense:—"A good understanding have all they that do his commandments."

The subject, then, presented to your consideration this evening, as that on which the importance of cultivating the heart, more than the intellect of a people, will be grounded, is,—the intrinsic adaptation of the fear of the Lord, or the religion of Christ in the heart, to enlighten, invigorate, and preserve the human intellect.

Its adaptation to do this, in respect to *moral* truth, would be a profitable and interesting theme, founded, as it would be, on the words of Christ,—“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.” But, in what is now to be said, reference will be had, principally, to its influence on the mind in relation to

intellectual truth; this being more directly appropriate to the occasion on which I speak.

The fear of the Lord in the heart of man makes the improvement of the intellect a matter of moral principle. It causes him to love the acquisition of knowledge in loving God: since the more he knows, the better is he able to appreciate and enjoy and serve this perfect object of his affections. Accordingly, it is one of its most marked effects in the minds of the comparatively ignorant and degraded of our race, to awaken the desire of knowing more ; at least, of knowing enough to read that word which is able to make them wise unto salvation. You may notice this to be true, alike in the history of the Greenlander and the Hottentot, the South-sea islander and the Hindoo, the Indian of our own borders and the slave of our Southern states. There is, indeed, something in the essential nature and government of the God of the Bible directly calculated to elevate and expand the human mind. It is the infinitely perfect and spiritual Jehovah, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders that now arrests the attention. The soul of man, naturally prone to receive impressions from the objects it contemplates, is peculiarly affected by such a Being and such a government as these. Considered even as mere theological theories, irrespective of their eternal truth, there is that in them highly calculated to exalt. The ingenuity of man never invented such a religious system. It is spiritual ; it is eternal in duration ; it is infinite in comprehensive extent ; it is pure. While some of the wisest of Grecian and Roman philosophers, and the most celebrated Roman poets, distrusted, and, in some instances, ridiculed the mytho-

logy of their country ; this places its believer above all other religious systems, so that he looks down on them as unsatisfactory and insignificant. It leaves the mind unfettered to examine all other systems, that it may learn their folly, without being in danger of yielding to their influence. Especially does it thus elevate, when the God and Saviour it reveals is sincerely loved and served. The meanest objects of attention, associated with such a Being, and studied as matters of duty to him, derive an interest and importance they would not otherwise possess ; and not only the profound investigations of the moral or natural philosopher, but the humblest employment of the most common tradesman or labourer become immediately invested with something of the brightness of heaven, because attended to for the glory of God.

Moreover :—the religion of Christ cultivates all those habits of mind and life that enable the intellect to act with the greatest power. It cherishes a humility that is willing to feel and confess its ignorance,—the first step in the acquisition of knowledge. We have already seen that it inspires a love of truth, which is one of the most powerful stimulants in labouring for its attainment ; while the habit of devotion, an invariable concomitant of piety, by calming the passions, and preserving the whole mind cool and composed in the most trying and exciting circumstances, is eminently calculated to promote the clearness and force of the human intellect. The celebrated and holy missionary, Henry Martyn, relates of himself, that during an examination for one of the most honourable and important rewards bestowed by the University of Cambridge, in England, it was the influence of deep

devotional feeling that so preserved the clearness and calmness of his mind, as to render him triumphant over his well-trained competitors. The benevolence of the gospel is also highly calculated to produce a similar effect. Cherishing as it does a firm determination to glorify God in doing good to men, it imbues its possessor with a fearlessness in embracing and expressing his conclusions on all useful subjects, that rises superior alike to the sneers or the threats of man ; and mainly anxious to advance the truth, manifests a noble freedom and energy in discovering and making it known. Historical facts, probably familiar to the minds of all of you, might be adduced as evidences of the correctness of this sentiment. It has been principally under the influence of such benevolence that martyrs, as well in science as in religion, have, through all ages, declared and vindicated truth.

The influence of the fear of the Lord on the body also is greatly favourable to the developement and increase of intellectual power. By cultivating habits of the strictest temperance, and delivering from slavish subjection to all those appetites included in the scriptural designation of "lusts of the flesh," it produces that sound mind in a sound body, commended by the Roman poet, and to the necessity of which, modern and Christian physiologists bear such ample testimony.

The contentment produced by the influence of religion is, likewise, highly favourable to intellectual acquisitions. A slight degree of attention will assure us that many are withheld from the willing, efficient, and successful employment of their powers, by the discontented contemplation of the real or imaginary difficulties by which they are surrounded. Like the

undecided man mentioned by Foster, they are continually wondering why all the obstacles in the world happen to fall directly in their own way. Regretting that they are not in some higher station of life, or that they have not been blessed with the leisure or advantages for improvement enjoyed by others, they waste the time, and the blessings, and the talents they might improve, in fruitless complainings over what is not, and perhaps, cannot be their's; and which, even if possessed, might not add, in reality, either to their happiness or success. In this way, too many lose the advantages they possess for obtaining wisdom, in fruitless regret for those they may not enjoy; instead of seeking and obtaining success, by catching with a vigilant eye and seizing with a vigorous arm, all the possibilities of their actual situation. The religion of Christ in the heart of man delivers from this danger. Rendering him content with such things as he has; teaching him, if favoured with one talent, cheerfully to place it at interest, that he may gain more; telling him that he who is faithful in little will be faithful also in much; it forms in him the habit of faithfully performing his own duty in his appropriate sphere, and thus lays the best and surest foundation for his present improvement, and future ultimate success.

The effect of the fear of the Lord on hope and imagination is also clearly advantageous to intellectual improvement. It is difficult to separate these two powers of mind, in their relations to this subject, without entering into a tedious and unnecessary analysis. I shall therefore speak of their combined operation. As many are deterred from the right and efficient use of their mental faculties by murmurs over

past and present circumstances, so the talents of others are enervated and misemployed by false imaginings and anticipations relative to the future. Many, while indulging ideas of what they may or shall be, pay no proper regard to what they now are, and ought to be. They suppose the time will come when they shall effect something ; although now they are performing comparatively nothing. Thus present advantages are permitted to pass away unimproved, and they perhaps die the victims of a procrastination that deterred them from doing any thing, by the continually deceptive imagination and hope of some future more convenient season. In opposition to such a state of mind, the religion of Christ in the heart humbles man to the rigid common-sense performance of present duty. While it affords the utmost and most sublime scope for the imagination, in the anticipation of what shall be ; it only allows the picture of the future to be bright, by the reflected light that present obedience flashes on its surface ; teaching him that any other prospect of happiness or success, however flattering, must prove eventually delusive, and "like the mirage in the desert, only tantalize him by a delusion that distance creates, and that contiguity destroys." True piety, therefore, does not permit man to enervate his intellectual powers by revelling in the false though gay hopes and imaginations of what is to come. It tells him to do with his might what his hand findeth to do, now. It warns him not to waste the immortal faculties and emotions God has bestowed, by employing them in relation to fictitious scenes, but to use them in respect to sober realities. The effect of piety on the student of any art or science, whether professional, mercantile,

mechanical, or agricultural, is, to render him soberly industrious at the present time and under existing circumstances; prompting him in things temporal, as truly as in things spiritual, to work while the day lasts, recollecting that "the night cometh, when no man can work." It may be confidently asked, if this is not the ordinary effect of religion on every mind. It may be confidently asked, if those whom any of you may know and have reason to believe are truly pious, do not manifest a constant and increasing desire to lay aside what is fictitious, and attend to what is real; whether in literature, or in the sciences and arts? I think that you must answer in the affirmative. Some minds, indeed, may have more, far more to struggle against, in this respect, than others, being naturally more imaginative and more sanguine; still it will prove to be true, that the gradual influence of the fear of the Lord tends to control and regulate even their hopes and imaginations, vagrant as they are, and to bind them to duty by the ligaments of truth.

There is also a powerful influence exerted by the religion of Christ in restraining the imagination, and keeping it in its appropriate sphere, amid the other faculties of the mind. While piety adds to its native power, by rearing it in the midst of the most beautiful and sublime objects; a love for truth is at the same time excited, superior to all other mental enjoyments; and the imagination is made the handmaid, and not the mistress, of the more noble mental powers. Thought, in such minds, leads; imagination follows, beautifying the conceptions, principles, and results of its leader, by its own resplendency. The former is the substance,—the clear, solid, unadulterated chrys-

tal; the latter is like the prismatic colours which the light of truth sheds forth from the substance it illuminates. Every reflecting man knows the difference between an imagination that outruns, impedes, and weakens the intellect, and even affects morbidly the moral powers themselves; and one, which subjected to the restraints of reason, sheds its bright light on the weighty matter, that has been brought up out of the mines of knowledge. The one is but an *ignis fatuus* of the brain, alluring only to deceive,—it may be to destroy; the other is the less glaring, but pure light, that like the cynosure of the north, cheers and guides the wanderer on his way.

Scarcely any thing is more dangerous in excited states of the public mind, on great moral or political questions, than one of those highly charged, powerful imaginations, not bound down to truth by clear knowledge, nor directed in the use of that knowledge by reason regulated by the fear of God,—the only right reason. Such a power can, and sometimes has, set a whole nation in ■ blaze, by the irrepressible heat of its own mad workings! In our own land, where there is such freedom of speech and writing on all subjects, such an imagination on questions of difficulty is highly dangerous. It can rouse the whole mass of popular mind into commotion, and produce revolution itself, before a Christian wisdom has had time to restrain its impetuosity, or discover, analyze, and throw out the weighty and far-reaching principles that alone can guide and save. I confess that I feel this single point to be of the utmost importance to the welfare of our country at the present time. When so many topics in politics and morals are before the public mind, agitating and exciting it

in a most wonderful degree, every imagination in the land needs to be invigorated, yet chastened, guarded, and controlled by reason under the influence of piety in the heart; by that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. Otherwise fanaticism may ruin us!

Hitherto, the adaptation of religion to the intellect has been considered, as it arises from its influence in cultivating certain habits of mind, principally, in individuals. It will be still more appropriate to notice its influence on communities. I remark therefore, further,—that while piety makes it a matter of moral principle in man to acquire knowledge, it also prompts him to the duty of imparting it, so far as possible, to others. Knowledge, like every other possession and attribute of man, is under the control of selfishness, until sanctified by the religion of Jesus. Accordingly, to however great a degree it may have existed in ancient Egypt, or Greece, or Rome, it never went out from the initiated to bless and exalt the people, but was confined to a favoured few, who laughed at the absurdities and degradation of what the Romans were sometimes wont to term "*profanum vulgus,*" the profane vulgar. Even when you notice any system of professed Christianity, which is nevertheless not imbued with the full spirit of the gospel, you will soon be called to remark in it a tendency to keep the blessings of knowledge from the great mass of the people. The Roman church proverbially does this. And, if I mistake not, it will be found on examination to be true, that other systems of religious error, just in proportion to the degree of their departure from the true principles of Christ, will be seen to retard the spread of

knowledge among the people. They will do this, either by representing the Bible itself as requiring such great learning to comprehend even its plainest doctrines as to discourage its study, and shake the public faith in its announcements; or, by gradually neglecting to take appropriate pains to instruct the ignorant throughout the land, and by gradually forming a self-indulgent and haughty aristocracy in literature, who, in praising each other, and contributing to one another's selfish delight, shall neglect, or, it may be, despise the multitudes perishing for the want even of intellectual knowledge. If, therefore, you would produce the spirit that will communicate, you must also cherish the fear of the Lord in the heart, and baptize learning itself in the benevolence of the gospel. The fact that many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased, is represented by the prophet as ■ characteristic of the triumphs of the gospel; indicating, beyond reasonable doubt, that the design of spreading truth abroad will be one great motive for the constant changing of place that is there designated.

While the benevolence of the gospel thus scatters knowledge among the people, it also inspires them with correct habits of thought and feeling in secular things, particularly in those of a political nature. The great principles of the moral government of God are, in one sense, so interwoven with human nature, that men, even when enemies to that government, tacitly acknowledge its great truths in their conduct towards each other. Jehovah has thus caused the very wrath of man to praise him, while the remainder thereof he has wonderfully restrained. All men, for example,

recognise in their conduct the necessity of some law to govern them, and that this law ought to be productive of public good ; they acknowledge the necessity of enforcing its observance by rewards and punishments, and of doing something to maintain its influence over the minds of the governed, if ever penitent transgressors of it are forgiven, that the law-giver may be seen to be just, while he justifies the guilty. Even anarchy itself will soon fight its way back to some kind of law, through clouds of dust and seas of blood ; so strongly are the principles of moral government adapted to the nature of man — a free agent, and so indelibly is the work of the law written on his heart.

This being the case, is it not most reasonable to suppose, that they, whose hearts have embraced, and whose wills have yielded to the perfect, spiritual government of God, would be most likely to feel, think, and act correctly in relation to the government of men ? Is it not reasonable to conclude that such persons would be the most firmly resolved in opposing all institutions that might not promote the public good, by maintaining the great principles of law ; and for the same reason would be the most obedient and zealous supporters of just legislation ? The principles of the government of God being in their hearts, and influencing their lives in relation to eternity, is it not probable that these also would govern their passions and regulate their conduct in respect to the governments under which they lived in time ?—particularly as these great and fundamental principles are necessarily, to a greater or less extent, recognised in all political institutions ? This clear conclusion of reason, we find to be corroboro-

rated by fact. It is admitted by historians virulently opposed to the religion of Christ, that the men most deeply imbued with its principles have been the zealous, enlightened, and firm advocates of free government and public liberty. This is recorded by Hume himself of the Puritans; and is verified by existing people, at the present day. It is in Protestant England,—“with all her faults,”—and to Scotland, and America, that you must go for the people, who, as a mass, manifest the most enlarged and enlightened views of political government;—for the people who think, feel and act harmoniously with just law, while they are the strenuous friends and asserters of liberty. In these nations, a moral as well as intellectual education has taught the citizens to obey the law of the Lord; and they, therefore, understand best and value most highly and obey most implicitly, the just laws administered by man over man; while they are, correspondingly, the haters of all oppression.

It ought also to be observed here, that the fear of the Lord causes the deductions of intellect, on legal, political, and moral subjects, to harmonize with facts. As in natural science there are certain fixed principles derived from long established facts, which, if not acknowledged in theory and practice, will lead to the grossest mistakes, because the proceedings of him who thus neglects them will be at variance with the most common phenomena; so there are certain fixed principles in morals, which, if not admitted and acted on, will cause similar errors. The religion of Christ is, of course, founded on these principles; and the man who acknowledges them in theory only, much more he who feels their experimental influence in his own

heart, will reason far more conclusively and powerfully, on all subjects connected with law, politics, and morals, than he who overlooks or rejects them.

The politician who admits the first great principle of the gospel,—the morally lost state of man, arising from his carnal opposition to the true character and righteous government of God,—will reason and write far more powerfully and correctly on any subject connected with the wise government of ■ country, than he who leaves this great fact out of sight. Indeed, one of the strongest corroborative evidences of the truth of the Bible arises from the tacit admission, knowingly or ignorantly, of the great leading principles it reveals, made by political or moral writers whose works have lived, or seem destined to live, long. It is principally this that gives to such writings as those of Cicero and Juvenal so strong a hold upon thoughtful minds in all ages. The very enemies of the great leading truths of the gospel will frequently be found, in the strongest parts of what they write or speak, tacitly admitting those great facts which the voice of nature speaks, trumpet-tongued, from her inmost recesses, throughout all time. There is a key to all subjects relative to the government of free agents found in the leading doctrines of the cross of Christ, of which if any one avails himself, only as a matter of human policy, he will find great advantage in analyzing any subject connected with the characters and duties of men. On these principles, I believe that the kind of doctrinal preaching heard by the people of ■ country has a great though silent effect on their intellectual characters, and their treatment of all subjects. Like the air they breathe, it diffuses an unseen yet

most powerful good or pernicious influence throughout their whole mental system.

As the fear of the Lord promotes, both in individuals and communities, those positive habits of mind favourable to intellectual advancement, so it delivers from the influence of such as are detrimental. It prevents the intellectual faculties of our nature from being overcome by the animal appetites and passions. Whenever these faculties of man have not been regulated and modified by correct moral feelings, they have invariably yielded, sooner or later, to the animal appetites of his nature, and knowledge has deteriorated. How often are we called to notice melancholy illustrations of this in the case of distinguished *individuals*. For a period in their careers they have run well. Before obtaining that fame after which they panted as a supreme good, they have been faithful to their idol, and have taxed their powers to the uttermost for its acquisition ; when, having obtained their end, they have become the slaves of fleshly lusts, until their sun has gone down in darkness, and the lustre of their literary reputation has been obscured by the blackness of gross moral delinquency. Even if the original acquirer of the fame may have barely escaped gross moral stains on his reputation, the animal indulgencies with which he regaled himself have, through him, often affected his posterity ; and they have been left inefficient, comparatively unlearned, if not vicious and the very pests of society.

The fact, thus frequently exhibited in the history of individuals, is equally corroborated by that of nations. The great kingdoms of antiquity have gone through precisely this process. Moral feelings being neglected,

the intellectual in man has been overcome by the animal. Wars and fightings, the children of evil lusts, have succeeded ; their constant companions,—crime, intemperance, and cruelty, have triumphed over reason ; and the glories of those nations have departed, to live only in name. So constant has been the recurrence of this process in the history of mankind, that distinguished writers, and among them the author of ■ late ingenious article in the North American Review, have maintained the theory,—a theory for which, alas ! they have had hitherto the sanction of too many facts,—that all nations, however distinguished and elevated, must eventually conform to the general analogy of things in the natural world, and like the plants of the garden, and the trees of the forest, have their regular periods of rise, growth, maturity, and decay. It is difficult to find any valid objection to this theory, except on the principles of the gospel, which, lifting mind above the slavery of matter, and teaching it that it is immortal, destroys all reasonings of analogy between its noble powers and the phenomena of nature; and, by causing it to live for eternity, tends effectually to eradicate those downward propensities that have hitherto enervated and destroyed its energies. Gazing, therefore, on these downward tendencies in our own beloved country, already in many places too alarmingly developed, the only hope of the Christian philanthropist must be in the members of the church of Christ. Turning to these, he must exclaim,—“ Ye are the salt of the earth ; but if the salt have lost its savour, where-with shall it be salted ? ” If you spread not abroad the moral instructions of the Bible, we must sink into the corruption of other lands !

Finally :—The religion of Christ in the heart can alone prevent the acquisition of knowledge from being an occasion of *sorrow*, both to individuals and nations. It is written in the word of eternal truth,—“ He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.” I understand this passage to speak of merely intellectual, in opposition to moral knowledge ; and to allude rather to the ultimate, future effects of such acquisitions, than to their present influence on the happiness of men. For, although by a refined analysis it might be shown that intellectual attainments, unregulated by moral principles, or even in some degree under its influence, do in many ways produce sorrow in their possessors, by rendering them sensible to evils they cannot avoid, or fanning in their breasts the flames of selfish passions,—still, there is certainly a high degree of pleasure ordinarily connected with the attainment and possession of learning, utterly precluding the propriety of generally connecting with it associations of sorrow. On the contrary, we far more commonly connect with it thoughts of delight. And, certainly, its acquirer and possessor will tell you, that in gaining and using it, he is the subject of a very high degree of pleasure, richly counterbalancing all accompanying or succeeding pain. It is in relation to its ultimate moral effects on the soul that the inspired writer makes his declaration concerning this sorrow of knowledge ; and considered in this light, the declaration will be found to be strictly true. The *individual* who adds to his intellectual stores, without yielding his heart to the requirements of Jehovah, increases the amount of his responsibility to God without presenting any corresponding return. He uses those acquisitions which the

faculties imparted to him by Jehovah enable him to make, only to promote his own selfish and worldly ends, without any practical reference to his great duty of advancing the glory of God in doing good to man. The result is, he not only sins against Jehovah by neglecting to love him with a supreme affection, but by becoming as a God unto himself, he at the same time indulges a state of mind unfitting him, by the selfish passions it involves, for the benevolent and blessed delights and enjoyments of heaven hereafter; so that in the end he shall find, to his aggravated sorrow, that in all the splendour of his acquisitions, he has but been walking in a vain show, perverting the price put in his hands to gain wisdom, and has taken the talents bestowed for his spiritual and eternal well-being, and ungratefully and wickedly covered them as in a napkin, and hidden them in the bowels of the earth. His attainments have been all earthly; leading him in all their variety and greatness to neglect duty to God, and in his devotion to things temporal, utterly to neglect things eternal; and let heaven and glory go, as subjects unworthy of his serious attention. Surely, this must add bitter ingredients to his cup of wo hereafter, and increase his sorrow. There are few more melancholy sights to a true Christian, than a mortal man, blessed with superior talents, and adorned with various literary and scientific acquisitions, living and dying, without ever acknowledging his responsibility to God, or performing his duties in relation to eternity. What a contrast is presented between the powers of his mind and the comparative littleness of the objects to which they have been devoted, and the contractedness of the sphere in respect to which they have been exerted!

The illustration of this truth in reference to *communities* is still more striking than that presented in individuals. The sorrow connected with individual acquisitions is seen, principally, in the future effects it is to produce in another world ; that associated with nations may be traced at the present time, in the present state of existence. Individuals die : there is a sense in which nations never die, until the world is dissolved. Before a whole people is taken away, another generation treads closely on the footsteps of the departing fathers, and the national character is preserved as a kind of permanent thing, untouched and unchanged by time and by death. Thus the sorrow following the attainment of merely intellectual knowledge by nations, may be seen in the history of their own existence in the present world, and is at this moment written in letters of blood and mourning. In the records of nations knowledge unsanctified by moral influence is eminently exhibited as an instrument of destruction in the hands of a madman. Ambition, using it as a means to accomplish its ends, has perverted it amid scenes of intrigue and slaughter ; or vice, using it to gratify its unhallowed propensities, has ruined its power in indulging raging lusts ; and merged the intellectual in the animal, until men have become as beasts, and spilled each other's blood, and left ruin and devastation behind, wherever they have turned their footsteps. Thus Babylon, and Sparta, and Athens, and Rome have successively passed away. Intellect could not save them : it was perverted by wicked hearts, until it became the very instrument of its own destruction. As the scorpion, surrounded by flames, is said to thrust its sting into its own vitals ; so mind, in the

fire of unregulated passions, has ever destroyed itself. In France,—a moral lesson almost losing its power to affect us, because so often contemplated,—in France, where the goddess of reason was personified and exalted in the temple of God, and men trusted to knowledge alone to guide and bless, what sorrow ensued ! It has been well said of her revolution, that it was like the destroying angel passing through the dwellings of the Egyptians, leaving not a house in which there was not one dead ! Let it then be repeated,—intellect alone can neither bless or save nations; but, unless regulated by moral principle, overcome by wicked passions, will eventually destroy them. This sentiment ought to be written on the heart of every American, never to be obscured or erased. Unless the mighty waves of human and party passion, at this moment rising, and every year increasing throughout the land, shall be duly restrained, repressed, and guided by the power of religious principle, binding them as the power of gravitation holds the surges of the mighty deep,—they will rise higher, and wax mightier, until, bending intellect itself to their purpose, they shall drive it onward in their own course, and eventually break over, and dash into pieces as a potter's vessel, the noblest of our political institutions !

I have thus spoken of the adaptation of the religion of Christ in the heart of man to invigorate and preserve his intellect. I have illustrated this adaptation by the tendency of the love of God—that great duty of religion—to make mental improvement a matter of moral principle, and give a real importance to the comparatively meanest object of contemplation. I have attempted to show that it promotes all those habits of

mind and life that enable the intellect to act with the greatest power,—cherishing humility, love of study, prayerfulness, benevolence, temperance, contentment, rightly regulating hope and imagination; prompting the desire of communicating knowledge to others, and teaching the people to feel and think correctly in relation to secular things. Finally, it has been my endeavour to show, that the fear of the Lord preserves from those practices, which tend to destroy the intellect; delivering from the tendency to merge the intellectual in the animal part of our nature, and preventing knowledge itself from becoming the occasion of ultimate sorrow to individuals and nations.

In what way does this adaptation of religion to the intellect form an argument for the support and encouragement of Sabbath-schools?

I answer,—by producing the inevitable and clear conclusion, that it is of far greater comparative importance to cultivate the heart than the intellect of the people, it exhibits the Sabbath-school system as one of the most efficient means for promoting this great end. The grand fundamental principle of this system is, that religion should be the foundation of education,—that the heart should be cultivated first, the intellect afterwards, and as a sure consequence. The very day on which these schools are held,—the Sabbath of the Lord; the instructors who conduct them,—generally the professed disciples of Christ; the institutions that most patronize them,—the churches of the Redeemer; the great text-book used in them,—the Bible,—“that choicest of earth’s blessings, that best of heaven’s gifts,”—all these stamp on Sabbath-schools the marked characteristic of piety as the guide to true

learning,—the important truth that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Moreover, the incidental influence of these institutions on other systems of education has been, extensively and efficiently to produce and fasten this conclusion in the public mind. I think it could be shown, by a fair detail of facts, that since these efforts for imparting instruction on the Sabbath have been made, the religion of Christ, as the foundation of all correct education, has been far more definitely and practically acknowledged in our common schools, academies, and colleges; so much so, that in several instances, the Bible has been introduced as a book to be studied, in some of our highest literary institutions.

Permit me, in corroboration of this remark, and as a passing tribute to departed worth, to cite the words of one, whose memory we have all much reason to love and venerate; of one, who was among the most enlightened, and firm, and influential friends of Sabbath-schools; of one, who has been taken from you since your last anniversary, in the midst of his life, and usefulness, and honour; but who has left, in an extensive and well-earned reputation, the impression of one of the most noble, yet humble, and benevolent of mankind. I allude to Thomas S. Grimke, of South Carolina. In an eloquent address in behalf of this system, he once said,—“Sunday-schools are, in my judgment, the primary schools, not only of religious and moral, but of intellectual education. The early development of the thinking and reasoning faculties of children, in connexion with the duties and affections, I regard as the great *désideratum* of all our schemes of youthful instruction. The Sunday-school

has already done much in this department, not only within its own narrow limits, but by leading the way for improvements in the lower branches of ordinary education, by enabling its own pupils to derive more profit from common schools, and by suggesting the composition of a great number of valuable books for the instruction of children. Sabbath-schools are among the most interesting and remarkable signs of the times. In them we behold a beautiful example of the parable of the fig-tree,—‘When its branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves.’ They have demonstrated the union that exists in the nature of man (never to be wisely or advantageously severed) between the cultivation of the understanding and the cultivation of our duties and affections. They are preparing the way for a better order of things, throughout the whole system of education; for their influence will be more and more sensibly felt, the more they are multiplied and improved.” Such was the language of this eminently good man, language already corroborated by what has occurred, and to be yet more clearly fulfilled as time rolls on.

It would seem also that this system is the only one calculated to meet, in any good degree, the present urgent wants of the nation for instruction, particularly in our newly settled states. I am credibly informed that thousands in almost every county in those states are utterly without adequate education. Even when teachers of daily schools are to be found, they are, in many, if not most instances entirely unfitted to sustain the responsibilities and perform the duties of good preceptors of youth. In many cases, they are mere merce-

naries, taking up the profession of teaching,—which should ever be esteemed one of the most honourable,—as a speculation, assisting them for a short time in the accumulation of gain, to be devoted ultimately to other purposes more desired than the interests of education. Look now at the widely spread wants of our country, and how shall you meet them without some such system as is presented by Sabbath-schools? By means of these, if strenuously and extensively encouraged and increased, the whole effective religious population of the land can be brought to labour in the instruction of the ignorant once in seven days. This will also have the indirect and blessed effect of causing the Sabbath to be honoured, in our destitute places, both by Christians and the people of the world; and thus ensure the perpetuity of one of the most efficient means of promoting the fear of the Lord in the hearts of the people. It can be shown, that there is the most alarming desecration of this holy day in places where the “church-going bell” is not heard, and no regular worship of God is maintained, owing principally to the want of the stated ministrations of the gospel. Now there is nothing so suited to produce respect to the Sabbath, even in the most favoured circumstances, as employment in doing good. This is indeed the only philosophical, as well as only scriptural mode of ensuring its correct observance. To abstain from doing evil on that sacred season, it is necessary that the people of God should be engaged in doing good; and it is entirely contrary to the nature of the human mind to expect that abstinence from engagements of every kind is a possible thing. The mind must be engaged in something positive. No

doubt meditation, prayer, and the consultation of the Scriptures should form a great part of the duties of this holy time; but mingled with these, it would seem to be very desirable, if not absolutely necessary to its entire consecration, that the people of God, feeling that "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath-day," should be engaged in some active exertions. The Sabbath-school affords such employment, and educates the public mind, when otherwise it would receive no instruction whatever. There are probably a few Christians or Christian families in almost every desolate region of our land. Let such be roused, by every lawful motive, to embark in the duty of instructing the ignorant in the most needful of all kinds of knowledge, every Sabbath. Unless some vigorous measures of this kind be adopted, I confess I see not what can be done to meet the pressing necessities of the times, and save the liberties of our country from being highly endangered, if not entirely lost, by an ignorant and wicked population. Behold, then, our beloved land! mark the mighty mass of mind that is, on the one hand, perverted; and on the other, is becoming lost in vice and animalism. In Sabbath-schools is to be found one of the most effectual remedies. Wherefore, urge them onward!—as patriots, as Christians, I beseech you, urge them onward!

A strong motive for this is derived from the truth with which I commenced these observations, and with which they shall now be closed. It is the fact that this fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, is, in its intrinsic nature, principally an exercise of the conscience and heart. Enough of reason to

comprehend law, with conscience to acquit or condemn as it is obeyed or broken, and a will to choose or to refuse in contemplation of its sanctions, form all the pre-requisites for its exercise. These are the prerogatives of every free agent under the government of God; and may be exerted alike by the learned and the ignorant, the rich and the poor, the old and the young. It would seem indeed that God, in mercy to man, has ordered that the heart and conscience in childhood should be comparatively far beyond the intellect, in order that this spring-time of existence should be sedulously improved for holy instruction,—so that knowledge might not be perverted by an unholy heart in maturer years, and be the occasion of future sorrow to the immortal soul. There is great benevolence and wisdom in this adaptation of the gospel primarily to the heart and conscience. It renders the way of salvation plain to the poor, and makes the law of the Lord, which it magnifies and makes honourable, what an eminent living statesman desired to make the statutes of England,—“not a sealed book, but an open letter; not barely the patrimony of the rich, but likewise the security of the poor; not a two-edged sword in the hands of the powerful, but a staff for the protection of the people.” Spread then the knowledge of this gospel abroad, throughout the length and the breadth of the land!—Spread it, by the ministrations of the sanctuary; spread it, by the circulation of the Scriptures;—more than all,—excepting by the voice of the living preacher,—spread it, by the instrumentality of Sabbath-schools!—until, from Maine to Louisiana, from the Atlantic

to the Pacific ocean, the combined lispings of infancy, ascending from earth to heaven, like the voice of many waters, shall proclaim, that out of the mouths of babes and of sucklings, God is perfecting praise. AMEN.

THE END

The Exigencies and Responsibilities of the present Age.

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED

IN THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,

M A Y 23, 1836.

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A SERMON.

“Can ye not discern the signs of the times?”—Matt. xvi. 3.

“Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation.”—Isa. xxxiii. 6.

THE history of the human family from the creation to the present time furnishes much valuable instruction. Among other things, we perceive the reluctance of the human mind to look at existing evils, to investigate their causes, and make provision for their removal. To this indifference is to be ascribed the downfall of the mightiest empires which our world has known. In most instances, God has not poured out his judgments in destroying a people until their cup of iniquity has been full—while the admonitions of his providence have been previously and repeatedly heard; affording them the amplest opportunity for repentance. Concerning the ancient people of God, we hear him saying: “They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they *understood* this, that they would *consider* their latter end.” And when the catastrophe which overwhelmed and swept them away was about to take place, we see the compassionate Redeemer weeping over their city and temple, whilst he utters the pathetic exclamation—“If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

Thus it has been with other nations. Abounding crimes have been beheld with unconcern, and the timely warnings of a kind Providence have been unheeded, until the overflowing scourge has come, making them monuments of the terribleness of Jehovah's displeasure. There have been periods too, when, in the equitable arrangements of his government, God has seemed to pour out the vials of his wrath upon the whole earth. These examples, written for our admonition, should not fail to produce in this nation salutary alarm and vigilance. It becomes us to inquire if we may not be allowing evils of fearful magnitude to exist among ourselves, without concern, and the employment of suitable means to effect a deliverance ; whether we are not sinfully disregarding the miseries of our race, involved in guilt, and shut out from the lights of knowledge and religion, which have illumined our land. These reflections will prepare us to consider, as the subject of this discourse, the exigencies and responsibilities of the present age.

I. Let us notice some of THE PECULIAR EXIGENCIES OF THE TIMES.

We are accustomed to congratulate ourselves that so much has been achieved by the benevolent enterprises of our day. There is indeed occasion for joy, but still more for action. The enemy is not slain, nor subdued. He is not even dismayed. The aggressive movements of the Lord's army have only excited him to vigilance and activity. He is strengthening his bulwarks, and preparing himself, not only for defence, but defiance. His legions, well marshalled, and prompt to execute his will, have been urged to the conflict. If the ground we now occupy be maintained, and the victory

completed, there must be renewed, vigorous, and continuous onsets. No sleep must be given to the eye, nor slumber to the eyelids, until the prince of darkness shall be bound to the chariot wheels of the Captain of our salvation. On the other hand, if we throw aside our armour, and give ourselves up to inglorious ease, we shall only embolden the foe: while calamities the most direful will be realized—calamities not only involving our country in ruin, but preventing the proclamation of redeeming mercy to other nations. To sustain these assertions, it will become necessary to advert to some of the appalling dangers which, in the present age, threaten our country and the world. We would not indulge visionary apprehensions, nor occupy the place of those who delight unnecessarily to awaken the fears of others. But we must not cry peace, peace, when there is no peace. We will lift aloud the warning voice.

1. Within our happy country there is yet allowed to exist a deplorable amount of ignorance. It ought not to be concealed from ourselves, or others, that with all the facilities for receiving a common English education, vast numbers of adults, and thousands of the rising youth in the various States are unable to read. Within the manufacturing establishments of the United States, not less than half a million of young females alone are employed. A large proportion of these are altogether uneducated. There are in four towns of Massachusetts, containing a population of less than 20,000, about 1900 children, between the ages of four and sixteen, who do not attend common schools any portion of the year. If this may be said concerning the most flourishing New England State, where per-

haps the facilities for obtaining education are more readily enjoyed than in any other of the Union, the number of uneducated persons throughout our country must be far beyond what is ordinarily supposed. Indeed, from the best information which can be obtained on this subject, the humiliating fact is clearly ascertained, that while in the more favoured portions of the United States, one in four of the population receive common school advantages, in others, not more than one in twenty are acquainted with the rudiments of learning.

No pious man or patriot can look at this fact without pain. Ignorance is the parent of superstition. It is the hot-bed, whence in every age the plants of error have sprung up and in which they have grown rankly, spreading their poisonous influence throughout the community. The man of sin has found his power advanced in proportion as the lights of learning have been withheld from the mass of the people. The history of the past may admonish us to expect the same results in this land, if an increasing number be allowed to grow up without the facilities of common education. None are more likely to become the dupes of sectarian zealots, or the instruments of artful and ambitious politicians, than the illiterate classes of society.

2. There is peculiar danger to be apprehended in our own land, from the influence of papacy. It is not the name of a papist, simply, that tends to awaken alarm, neither is there necessity of shunning the society of those who are known to belong to the Romish church. Far less ought they to be the objects on which shall be expended the rage of sectarian opposition. Their influence should be met only by the

force of truth and love. But while these things are said, the system, the operations, and the instruments of popery are to be dreaded as among the most formidable antagonists of our national prosperity. But is there reason to apprehend that Romanism will ever obtain an ascendancy in our land? We may most devoutly pray for exemption; our hopes may be strong, but, without a miracle, this dominion will be obtained, unless timely counteracting measures are adopted. Look at the instrumentalities which are even now employed, and especially at the prospective influences to be brought to bear upon our population. Is there nothing in all these arrangements for the origination of seminaries, nunneries, and colleges, which are to be under Catholic control? What mean all these preparations for moulding the minds of American youth, especially throughout the widely extended area of our western country? And, what more than all, occasions fear, is the incautious patronage which these institutions are receiving from our citizens professedly Protestant. Many, distinguished for talent and influence, have placed their sons and daughters, at the most critical period of life, under the tuition of those who will consider it duty to make every thing subservient to their views. Another fact, which cannot fail to be obvious to all, is of most portentous character. Thousands from the dominions of the pope are every year crowding our shores. These, long enchain'd in ignorance, and superstitiously devoted to the Romish faith, are well qualified to become the tools of an aspiring priesthood. Let them not be repelled, there is room enough within our borders to furnish them a refuge; but let us beware

of the silent but increasing power, which these very individuals will exercise in our political and social compact.

3. Another ground of alarm is the irreligion of the age. It is called, and appropriately called, the day of revivals and of effort; but there is still the most appalling destitution of moral influence. It cannot be concealed that there has been also a revival of sin. Even in our land some of the most detestable vices have ceased to excite emotion. Our large towns and cities are becoming distinguished for their profligacy, and thousands of our youth are already lured into the paths of the destroyer. Can any man fail to perceive, too, the growing corruption found among many of the leading men of our country—a corruption confined to no party, and restrained by no considerations of public weal? Pride, profanity, lust, and ambition are shamelessly indulged by many of those who ought, by their elevation in society and their influence over the rising generation, to be specimens of moral loveliness. We see too among them the elements of discord fearfully at work. A most baneful influence is produced on all classes of society, by the political strife in the midst of which they are elevated to official distinction. The raging passions of men, like so many subterranean fires, are threatening an explosion which may bury our beloved country in one common ruin.

Our thanks are due to the King of saints that the churches of America are yet allowed to exist, and many of them to be greatly increased in number and efficiency. But this increase is not in a ratio with the growth of our population. If the most highly favoured portions of these United States be selected, it will be

seen that a vast disproportion exists between the influence of piety and irreligion, between the number of those who serve God and those who serve him not. In the city of Boston, so long famed for its religious advantages, it is ascertained by recent investigations, that thirty thousand are not accustomed to spend the Lord's day in the house of prayer. Among the adult population of our country, not one half can be numbered as regular attendants on public worship, and not more than one in nine are professedly pious. Not to say any thing of the popular vices of the day, let a glance be taken at the entire neglect of spiritual realities which characterizes the multitude. How few read the Holy Scriptures which are able to make them wise unto salvation. The luxury and effeminacy of the rich, the worldliness of the middle classes, and the vices of the poor, strike the eye of the Christian philosopher, as he gazes at the spiritual condition of our country, and fill his heart with the most painful emotions. By these signs of the times, his apprehensions are awakened that we may be going the way of those nations which once flourished, but now are known only on the page of history. Nor are such fears the phantoms of a distempered imagination. If as a people we lightly esteem the Rock of our salvation, may we not expect Him to forsake us, so that one of our enemies shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. If in proud independence we refuse to render homage to God, who, from the beginning of our history, has mercifully presided over us, and crowned us with unnumbered civil and religious privileges, we may with unerring certainty calculate to experience the severity of his wrath. And should that hour come when

from our high elevation we are allowed to fall, how fearful will be our doom !

4. Infidelity is making advances in our land. Though skeptics of the present day have not organized their forces, and are engaged in no very systematic efforts to destroy the influence of the gospel, yet their number is increasing, and the pernicious results of their theory are becoming every day more and more alarming. A few bold spirits are venturing to become the champions of this system, and in high places to advocate the doctrines of Paine, Volney, and Voltaire. But while these men, with a daring and perseverance worthy of a nobler cause, are not numerous, the prevalence of their views is confined within no narrow limits. The disciples of this school are to be found among all classes of our fellow citizens, and not unfrequently those who never enter the arena of public controversy exercise a most active and successful agency in spreading the poison of infidelity. Let our stages and steamboats, our taverns and hotels, bear testimony to the truth of this remark. The bitter sarcasm, the idle jest uttered at the expense of revelation, and designed to accomplish its subversion, are almost daily to be heard, not only from the more intelligent, but the unpolished and ignorant. The young and thoughtless, uninstructed in the great principles of inspiration, ardent in their passions, and impatient of restraint, are easily duped, and soon become accustomed to walk in the way of sinners, and to occupy the scorner's chair. The claims of their Maker and the interests of a future world are alike disregarded, and with a guilty impenitence they resolve to remain aloof from those influences which might subdue and save them. We might

here allude to that system of religion that takes away from our Immanuel those attributes which constitute at once his brightest glory and the strongest hope of ruined man. There is, too, another class whose influence is perhaps as extensive and pernicious; those, who admitting the truth of revelation, still concur in neutralizing its holy sanctions by a denial of the just and unending retributions which are disclosed throughout its sacred pages. This milder species of infidelity has become the refuge of many minds which were suffered to remain untaught and unimproved in early life.

5. It may not be amiss to advert to another fact which stands out in bold relief in the history of the passing age. Christians are not themselves united. The armies of the living God are not concentrating their forces, and bringing them to bear against the powers of darkness. The name of Christian in its hallowed scriptural import, and with its primitive associations, seems to have lost its attractive influence, while some theological dogma, or peculiar method of operation, is made the bond of union. The kingdom of Christ, my brethren, is too much divided. Truth is indeed precious, more precious than rubies, and should be maintained. But the apostolic injunction, "speaking the truth in love," is not sufficiently regarded.

6. In referring to the exigencies of the times, we ought not to forget the condition of our world. What has been done for its renovation affords indeed ample ground for grateful acknowledgments. The right hand of the Lord has been exalted, and his smile enjoyed, in prospering the benevolent exertions of the last fifty years. In a few dark places the light of divine truth has gleamed. Missionaries have gone

forth. Many languages have been acquired, and in them the Scriptures have been translated and distributed. Schools have been organized, churches formed, and numbers converted to God ; and yet in surveying the world, on how few spots can the eye of Christian benevolence rest with feelings of delight. The prince of the power of the air yet reigns with unmolested sway over myriads of our race. Among the three hundred millions of China, there can scarcely be found the number of righteous men which would have preserved guilty Sodom from destruction. Here is one third of the human family, in one dense throng, treading with heedless awful precipitancy the broad way, and hastening to the abodes of eternal death. Look, too, at the other numerous nations of Asia, with their ignorance, their miseries, and their guilt. Let Africa with her dark sons, deluded by a foul and debasing superstition, be contemplated. Her habitations drenched in blood, and her children torn from her, she sends up her loud lamentations to heaven, and cries for help. As yet her wailings have been almost unheeded. While the world had combined to make her domains the scene of rapine and blood, a few have indeed gone to her rescue. They have carried the angelic song “on earth peace ; good will towards men,” and caused it to be heard by a few of her sons. But the great mass of her ninety millions are yet unacquainted with the joyful sound, and, hopeless, are going down to the grave.

The spectacle which Europe presents is but little less humiliating and painful. With all her improvements in science and the arts; under the influence of a spurious Christianity, she groans in the chains of national oppression, and a spiritual bondage still more galling and

grievous. And what shall be said of the dwellers on our own continent? Excepting the few millions which are found within these United States, they sit in darkness and the shadow of death. How painful the thought that of the population of forty millions which America contains, more than half of this number are under the vassalage of the Pope of Rome.

Thus the greater part of the earth is yet enveloped in superstition and steeped in crime. We have already alluded to the fact that something has been attempted to remove this darkness and guilt. But we ask, and would press the question, what has been effected? Numbering all the missionaries, male and female, sent forth by evangelic denominations, there is not more than one for every million of the immortal souls which people the regions of spiritual darkness. The influence of the press is as yet but feebly felt: But few of the rising generation in heathen lands are in Sabbath-schools, or receiving that tuition which may elevate and save them.

In taking our observation of the signs of the times we have seen much to sicken the heart, and call into exercise its keenest sensibilities. While the soul is moved with compassion, and desire for the salvation of the perishing multitudes is cherished, let the inquiry be agitated, *Can nothing be done effectually and immediately to extend the empire of truth, and holiness, and love? Cannot the exigencies of the world be met?* Let us, with the prophecies in our hands, and the love of Christ in our hearts, approach and contemplate this momentous question; which will lead us to notice,

II. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRESENT AGE.

Speedily to effect ■ moral revolution in our country and the world, such a revolution as the facts which have been brought before us indicate to be necessary, will by some be considered visionary, and altogether impracticable. This change may not soon occur ; but it is far from being unreasonable or opposed to revelation to believe in the possibility of universal subjection to the Prince of peace, within a very limited period. Many *are* to run to and fro, and knowledge *is* to be increased. A nation *is* to be born in a day. With the facilities which the providence of God is now opening for the dissemination of truth, and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, these prophecies might soon be accomplished. Let it be supposed that every one who names the name of Christ were holding forth the word of life, and with the spirit of a pardoned rebel were doing his utmost to send the gospel to every creature, would it be presumptuous to look for a rapid turning of the nations to God ? Might not many of us who mingle in the sacred services of this evening then expect ourselves to see the salvation of God as diffusive as the range of sin ?

The work, my brethren, is practicable. What *can* be done, then, ought to be attempted. From the responsibility of effecting every thing that lies within the compass of human agency, the pious of this country *cannot be released*. If they possess at this moment the resources of talent, influence, and wealth, by which may be put into operation a system of means adapted to remove the moral evils which afflict this nation—if the tidings of redeeming love may at once be sent to

other lands, no one will hesitate to decide on the path of duty.

Before we refer particularly to the obligations of the church in the present crisis, it may be proper for a moment to look at what may be considered the *most* effectual means of supplying the necessities of the age. In deciding this question, we are irresistibly led to the conviction, that they consist mainly in the *mental and moral training of the rising generation*. This is the great desideratum. We will not disparage other means. While those whom God has counted worthy by putting them into the ministry, are to prosecute the work of feeding the flock of Christ, and preaching his gospel to all ages and conditions of men, and while we should be unwilling to derogate from the paramount importance of this office, we are convinced of the truth of the assertion just made. Light must be poured upon the mind of the rising age. The biography of thousands of the most estimable of human kind, attests, under the blessing of God, the power of an early moral training. To the nursery are to be traced many of the best impressions of which the heart is susceptible. The reverse of this is also true. The ungovernable passions and unholy habits which distinguish a large portion of men, have their origin in a defective education, as well as a depraved nature. And it is a notorious fact that even when the grace of God triumphs over the depravity of the heart, and a profession of religion is made, a marked deficiency of Christian character is often to be ascribed to inveterate habits formed in the beginning of life.

If then we would exercise a general and salutary influence on our dark earth, we are invited to dif-

fuse widely and rapidly the light of science and of gospel truth. Thus shall we find a remedy for the evils to which allusion has been made. Enlighten the public mind, and give the ethics of the Bible the prominence they deserve in the formation of public sentiment and manners, and you give the best guarantee that our political rights and religious privileges shall be handed down unimpaired to other generations. You will anticipate and neutralize the influence of Romanism and infidelity of every shape. The morals of our country would be purified, while to the most distant nations of the earth we might expect the tidings of salvation to be sent. What we have thus said is in perfect accordance with the doctrine of the entire alienation of the carnal mind from God, and of supernatural agency in the conversion of the soul. None more than ourselves are ready to plead for the necessity of Divine influence in this great work, or to urge continual prayer for success in every effort to lead the young to God.

If these observations be justly founded, the responsibilities of the passing age are of the most weighty and affecting character. Let us, my brethren, be willing to ascertain our duty, and joyfully to enter upon its execution. And O, that we could occupy such a position, as would allow us to reach the ear and heart of every Christian throughout our whole nation! We would call with an urgency which could brook no denial. We would plead for Christ's sake, and for the sake of undying souls, hastening to the judgment, that they should prayerfully consider the following suggestions:—

1. On the church devolves the duty of bringing all the children and youth of our country under

Sabbath-school instruction. *Next to parental influence*, no means can be as successful in the mental and moral education of youth generally as this system. Every well prosecuted experiment which has been made since the days of Robert Raikes, fully justifies this remark. It will be recollected that in its direct influence it is designed to operate on children and youth. It lays hold of the elements of society. The mind is taken when impressions may most easily be made. There are no strong prejudices to uproot, no inveterate habits to destroy. Unbiased the youth drinks in instruction, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, becomes conformed to the image of the Saviour, and devotes the freshness of life to his service.

Within the range of these operations, all classes of society may be comprehended. The children of the pious and the vicious, the rich and the poor; those who joy the best advantages for mental culture during the week, and those who are entirely destitute—all may receive material benefit. The school being divided into classes, and each being conducted by its own teacher, and an interim of six days occurring between each assemblage, there is no opportunity by evil communications to corrupt good manners. There is something too in the principle, on which these benevolent operations are conducted, admirably suited to the end proposed. Both the teacher and the taught are perfectly voluntary in their attendance at the Sunday-school. In relation to the former, it is easy to perceive that the promptings of Christian kindness will incline to the diligent occupancy of the hours devoted to instruction. In the affectionate interest which is felt for

those under tuition, an almost irresistible power will be exercised over the mind. The scholar goes forth with joy to meet his beloved instracter, and mingle in the interesting services of the day. His weekly lessons may be a drudgery, but these will be a pleasure ; the one he may perform by constraint, the other with a willing mind. He soon perceives that the warmest regard for his temporal and eternal interest is cherished by those who conduct the school, and he cannot but confide in and love them. He stores his memory with portions of the word of life, and while on the Lord's day he reads with his class its sacred pages, instruction distils as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. The heart and life cannot but be affected.

It will be remembered also that one of the most valuable results of Sunday-school influence is its preservation from the allurements of sin. The Lord's day, unless profitably employed, is more than any other likely to be injurious to the morals of youth. It is a season of suspension from worldly business. Within the Sunday-school circle there is deliverance from the fascinations which the great adversary spreads to allure into the paths of ruin. Here is an atmosphere, beneath whose cheerful influence the plants of virtue may thrive, and be productive of fruit unto eternal life.

This institution affords a favourable opportunity for the developement and cultivation of mind. The experiment has been made ; and in many instances, children with Sunday-school tuition alone have advanced more rapidly than those who, with equal talent, have enjoyed the advantage of week day instruction. The free conversational mode of communicating information has

a most happy tendency to awaken curiosity, and increase a thirst for useful knowledge. Not only is the memory exercised, but the judgment. The youth is taught to think ; nor is the disposition to acquire knowledge confined to the Lord's day. It continues throughout the week, while facilities for its gratification are furnished by the volumes so carefully prepared by this Society. But the moral effect is still more obvious and valuable ; not simply in allowing access to these well-selected libraries, but in the perusal of God's own book, the Scriptures of unerring truth. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." In these schools, the rising generation are made familiar with its sublime doctrines, its fearful denunciations against sin, its kind invitations and promises, and its holy precepts. These divinely inspired records are placed before the vision, and pressed upon the conscience, with the winning affection of those who know their inestimable value. It is one of the happiest peculiarities of this system, that the Bible is the only text-book employed by those who read, and that even the youngest and most unlettered child is accustomed to hear its heavenly truths. Who can enter a well-organized school, and behold the teacher with his class seated around him, reading with fixed attention the word of God, and not be struck with admiration at the happy adaptedness of this scheme to make impressions of the best and most abiding character? Perhaps in no one method could the church put forth an instrumentality, bearing so directly on the interests of the present age, and of that which is to follow.

As yet the servants of Christ have been accustomed too lightly to feel their responsibilities in this particular. A very considerable number of churches in

United States have not within their limits a Sunday-school, whilst crowds of youth are allowed to spend the Lord's day in habits of indolence and vice. Among those churches already interested in the plans of the Union, how few are unanimously and vigorously employed! Where is the congregation of believers, a majority of whom are doing all they can to induce the youth of their immediate vicinity to attend the Sabbath-school? On a few individuals falls the burden of keeping the system in operation. To those Christians who are allowing themselves to neglect these opportunities of doing good, may we not appeal in the language of the Master, "Why stand ye all the day idle?" Are they not guilty of shameful indifference to the souls of men, and injustice to their brethren? Do they not prove recreant to the cause of Him they profess to love? If they wish to do good, here is a sphere of usefulness which all may occupy; the old man and matron, the young man and maiden, the rich and poor, the educated, and even illiterate may most effectually operate as pioneers in preparing the way of the Lord in his universal reign. It is supposed, that in the United States there are, between the ages of three and fifteen, no less than four and a half millions of children and youth. In all the schools of the land, there are not more than one million regular attendants, leaving three millions five hundred thousand destitute of Sabbath-school instruction, many of whom are without suitable moral training. Most of these might be persuaded to enter the Sabbath-school, if in every part of our country the lovers of Christ would bestir themselves, and do what they could. Should each church member be willing to become a volunteer, and search

out all the youth of his vicinity, and with becoming earnestness endeavour to prevail on them to come in, a vast increase would be the result. In many instances, these kind importunities would be unavailing, but the attendance of much the larger portion would be secured. What a noble work is here spread out before American Christians. *It may be accomplished;* while it promises results of inconceivable importance, results which will be felt in this world and that which is to come.

Let the experiment be made. In every city, village, and neighbourhood, from Canada to the Floridas, and from the Atlantic to our Western boundary, let the Lord's people do what they can to fill schools already formed, and originate new ones where none exist. Let not only the children of the rich be induced to attend, but let the families of the poor be visited, and persuaded to share in the common blessings of the institution. And here a serious and deeply interesting question forces itself upon our notice. Can those who have passed the precincts of childhood be induced to fill our classes, and familiarize their minds with the pages of unerring truth? We believe they can; but not without the most diligent and kindly influence of the disciples of Christ. Parents must leave no means untried to give their sons and daughters a taste for the exercises of the school. Merchants should endeavour to sway the minds of their clerks, and tradesmen of their apprentices. Every friend of good order, irrespective of religious considerations, should throw in the weight of his influence.

The young men of our country will soon themselves compose the nation. With all the strong tendencies

of the youthful heart to sinful indulgence, and with the barriers which pride and shame may erect against their introduction into the Bible-class, what is to succeed but the most affectionate and persevering importunities of the friends of Sabbath-schools? How are they to be saved from the contagion to which they are exposed on every hand from restoratives (or confectionaries) and theatres, from gaming tables and lottery offices, from intemperance and lewdness, with all the other corrupt and corrupting associations which so fearfully abound in our land? The Union offers an asylum; but the beneficent work of bringing them within its walls belongs to the members of the church of Christ. And will not the pious respond to these pressing claims of duty? Will they not rejoice to enter this field of labour? Can they be willing to rest until all that is practicable has been done to bring the rising generation of the United States to mingle in these weekly assemblages?

2. It belongs to the churches of our land to sustain these nurseries of virtue and piety. A feverish excitement may prevail in the Christian community, which shall immediately result in the formation or enlargement of schools, but which subsiding, may ultimately prove most disastrous to the cause. We do indeed wish to see the church awaking from her slumbers, and with zealous activity applying herself to this work. Every friend of God and man we would have employed. But let all this be the result of principle. Let it proceed from a clear perception of the exigencies of the times, and a conviction of personal responsibility. The cost must be counted, and beginning to build, every one must continue to work until the structure

be completed. If the objects of the Union be carried out, the number of officers and teachers must be greatly multiplied. Regularity, punctuality, and diligence must characterize all who enter upon this work, while the resolution is made, that it shall not be deserted, without the clearest indications of duty. Thus employment of a valuable character will be given to large numbers of the disciples of Christ. While benefiting the scholars, they will themselves be doubly blest, and impart real good to the community. To some extent in keeping up Sunday-school operations, the deficiency of ministers in our country will be supplied, and the habit of meeting every Lord's day to read the Scriptures, and to worship, will prevail even in sparsely inhabited regions. The monthly plan of assembling, resorted to in many of the southern and western states, will be abandoned. As there will be found at each place of worship a number collected to instruct the youth of the neighbourhood, it would soon become the practice to have a special season of public prayer and praise.

In sustaining these institutions, enlarged contributions will be needed ; but especially much fervent and believing prayer. While every one who can do any thing directly in carrying on this work is under most solemn obligations faithfully to employ his talents ; while each should labour as if he were determined it should not fail : the eye of faith and the voice of prayer should be directed to the eternal hills, whence all strength cometh. In the various departments of effort to promote this benevolent design, the indispensable necessity of the Divine blessing should be deeply felt. The officers and managers of this Union, their agents

and missionaries, all the superintendents, teachers, and visitors throughout the nation, should with *one accord* importune the throne of grace for guidance and success. *This is our chief reliance.* If, in exploring these states, and establishing a school in every neighbourhood, we are to see the desire of our hearts accomplished, the rising generation submissive to the laws of Christ, the blessing of God must be realized. “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” “Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.”

3. The volumes of the American Sunday-school Union ought to receive a much wider circulation. It will not be saying too much to assert their incomparable excellence, and their happy adaptation to the improvement of the young. Their variety and value have escaped the attention of much the larger portion of our fellow citizens. They are suited not only to the capacities of children, but many of them to the man of mature age, and may afford instruction alike to the intelligent and illiterate. In the name of the Union, we invite inspection. They deserve a place in all the families of this land. No parent need fear their influence. They may with safety be placed in the parlour and the chamber, the counting-room and the workshop. Unlike the ephemeral and in many instances licentious publications which are daily issuing from the press; they leave behind them impressions of the purest kind, and impart most valuable information. No good man of any denomination could enter upon the examination of their merits, without being surprised at the judgment and talent with which they have been

prepared. He would not fail to be convinced that in their compilation the wisest heads and best hearts have been employed. Consisting of nearly 450 publications, containing from 8 to 546 pages ; treating on a variety of interesting and instructive subjects, these volumes may exert an influence which shall assist to prepare the coming age for the ascertainment and performance of its various obligations.

If these works were at once placed in the hands of our youth, and they could be persuaded to peruse them, the intellect of the nation would become invigorated. A reading population would rise up, and knowledge, one of the most effectual safeguards of our religious and political institutions, would be diffused among all classes of the community.

The providence of God most loudly calls on the American public to give a more extensive circulation to these volumes. An engine of incalculable, yet salutary power, is furnished, and it may at will be made to operate with continually increasing force. At a comparatively small expense, any neighbourhood, and without difficulty, the whole nation itself, may be supplied. Where are our men of property who wish to make a profitable use of their money, such an investment as shall benefit their posterity ? Where are our patriots who desire the perpetuation of our venerated institutions ? Our philanthropists, who seek the weal of their species ? Let them look at these facilities for effecting extensive good to their country and the world. A single man may through these volumes be the instrument of making impressions on a thousand minds which shall survive the records of time. While canals are opened, and rail-roads constructed, and every

species of improvement is receiving most liberal encouragement, here is an enterprise which promises to improve the intellect and morals of the present age.

4. The mental and spiritual improvement of youth in heathen lands deserves the employment of prompt and vigorous means. There are now more than 150 millions between the ages of five and fifteen, in lands where the pure gospel is not known. Is it not the duty of the Christian world to engage more systematically in the education of heathen youth? Are there not many now enjoying themselves in luxury and ease, who ought to consecrate their talents to the work of instructing them in the elements of science and the truths of the Bible? We now behold an open door, which may be entered by all who are willing to go. At the various mission stations there is ample opportunity for the establishment of schools. In this way on an extended scale might funds be judiciously employed.

These demands will be every day increasing. At no distant period we have reason to expect that hundreds of weekly and Lord's day schools will be placed under the management of converted heathen, while it will be our privilege to furnish them with well selected books. In this department of effort for the conversion of the world, the American Sabbath-school Union may properly become the almoner of Christian liberality.

At this very time the call for help from heathen lands is heard in piercing tones. Thousands of children may at once be collected. Who can read without emotion, the touching narrative, recently received, of the formation of a Karen boarding school. These children, sixty in number, from one or two villages,

walked a distance of thirty or forty miles, to unite themselves with the school at Tavoy. "They give us," says the missionary, "great satisfaction, in regard both to the progress which they make in learning, and their moral conduct. I would venture to challenge any school in America, embracing the same number of children, to exhibit a fairer specimen of improvement in study, and of good behaviour. Though not required to devote but about seven hours of the day to study, they voluntarily spend also most of the hours allowed for relaxation in application to their books. They are children who had never been taught, by precept or example, the value of education; whose parents and ancestors, from generation to generation, never learned the *use* of letters; who, indeed, until the present generation, had no written language."

Such schools ought to be multiplied in every part of the heathen world. To a much wider extent must the energies of the church be brought into action, ere the latter day glory shall burst upon the world, and the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. The work is indeed great, and no time should be lost. Within thirty years, a number equal to the whole population of the globe will have gone to the retributions of eternity.

During the last year, the American Sunday-school Union received little more than 2000 dollars for the foreign field. If all that is done by the Christian world for the education of heathen youth could be ascertained, we should find abundant cause for humiliation. Can American Christians be satisfied with the limited expenditures made for the instruction of the 150,000,000 of immortal minds, now uncultivated, but

capable of ever growing enlargement? Must the children of the present time, in pagan lands, rise up, and, like their fathers, continue to gaze at the heavens above them; to be familiar with the loveliness and variety of Nature's scenery, and remain ignorant of their pure and benevolent Author? Shall the next age remain fettered by the chains of superstition? Will no hand be stretched out to rescue from the crimes and miseries of an apostate world? Who will come up to the help of the Lord; to the help of the Lord against the mighty? We pause for an answer. We look around for assistance. We believe that succour will come. Is there not a movement among the sons of light, the redeemed of the Lord? Behold from every quarter of our privileged nation, many running with eager joy. Listen to the consecration they make, "Here are we, send us." Another numerous band follows, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, "how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Thousands of kindred spirits from distant portions of the earth, constrained by the love of Christ, begin to look over a world lying in sin, and to feel the burden of their responsibilities, and to prepare for action.

Combinations are formed on the principles of love to God and man, for the dissemination of truth. Light increases. With resplendent brightness, the gospel sun goes forth, scattering the shades of moral night, and carrying life and joy to the most cheerless and distant clime. "The wilderness and the solitary place are glad, the desert rejoices, and blossoms as the rose. It blossoms abundantly, and rejoices even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon is given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they see the

glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. And, while the loud acclamation goes up from earth's redeemed myriads, "the kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ;" a voice from heaven is heard as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

THE END.

The Connexion between early Religious Instruction and Mature Piety.

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED

IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,

MAY 22, 1837.

BY STEPHEN H. TYNG, D.D.,

RECTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY, PHILADELPHIA.

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A SERMON.

“Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.”—Psalm xcii. 13—15.

THE meaning of this figurative language will be readily perceived ; and, I trust, the propriety of its application to the present purpose and occasion will be equally apparent.

The object of the psalmist is to place the aspects of piety and sin, as they are displayed in the history and lives of men, in a strong contrast. In doing this, he gives great effect to his descriptions by deriving his illustrations from the vegetable kingdom of nature. He exhibits the wickedness of man as often growing with great rapidity ; but he affirms its duration is as transitory, and its destruction as certain, as its maturity has been precocious. “The wicked spring as the grass, and the workers of iniquity do flourish ; but it is, that they shall be destroyed forever.” “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree : yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.”

In strong contrast with such a description of the speedy and entire destruction of wicked men, he exhibits the growth of the renewed soul in piety as permanent and unchanging. “The righteous shall

flourish like the palm tree ; he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon." His obedience and his prosperity shall be persevering and sure. His purity and his peace shall be eternally immoveable. He then traces, in the verses of my text, the origin of this growing, vigorous piety, and exhibits it as springing from an early introduction to the ordinances and instructions of true religion ; "a planting in the house of the Lord." He describes it also in its subsequent history. He affirms, that this early participation in religious benefits, this "planting in the house of the Lord," shall be followed by a continued religious character; a piety which shall still be found brighter and more valuable, even in extreme old age. "They shall flourish in the courts of our God ; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing." He finally declares, that the assurance which he has of the fulfilment of this hope rests upon the power and the faithfulness of God. The blessing will be bestowed, "to show that the Lord is upright ; that he is the rock : that there is no unrighteousness in him." This work of grace in the soul of man, so powerful, so permanent, so glorious, is designed to proclaim the honour and to display the fidelity of that Almighty Being, "God manifest in the flesh," upon whose power its accomplishment entirely depends.

Under this beautifully figurative language, the text affirms that connexion which I apprehend will be found very uniformly to subsist, between an early acquaintance with religion, in its doctrines and ordinances, and the piety of mature and aged life. The object of my present discourse is to trace some of

the facts of this connexion ; and to show some of the peculiar advantages which early religious instruction, and especially the instructions of the Sunday-school, are found to give towards the formation of mature and fruitful piety, and the securing of ultimate joy and comfort in religion. In order to present the suggestions which I would offer upon this subject the more clearly, I will attempt,

I. To illustrate the operation of early religious instruction towards the formation of subsequent religious character.

II. To exhibit the foundation upon which we cherish this important expectation; and,

III. To urge, upon this ground, the claims of the Sunday-school enterprise, and of the American Sunday-school Union, upon the attention of my hearers.

I. I shall first attempt to illustrate the operation of early religious instruction, and especially Sunday-school instruction, towards the formation of subsequent religious character.

1. The great object which we have in view in all such instruction, and for which we anxiously labour in our efforts for the establishment of Sunday-schools, is happily expressed in our text. We wish to *plant* the children of our land in the house of the Lord. We wish to constitute true piety their pleasure and their home ; to make the privileges and ordinances of the gospel, the appointed channels of divine grace to man, the soil in which they are to grow, and the atmosphere from which they are to be nourished, by the blessing of God containing and

imparting the vitality, the life-giving spirit, by which they are to be sustained, and through which they are to gain the gift of life eternal. This is the grand object of Sunday-school instruction. We desire and intend, under the good hand of our God upon us, to plant the whole rising generation of immortal beings around us in the sanctuary of the Most High ; not as posts, or as stones, in the mere formalism of religious ceremony, but as living trees, in the fruitfulness and beauty of truly spiritual character. We would forestall the power of Satan and the evil influence of the world ; and pre-occupy the mind, and bind the affections, and pledge the character, and covenant the soul to Christ, before the enemy shall have time allowed him to come in with power, and sow his harvest of tares with effect. In the case of each individual child, we wish to be the instrument of converting a sinful soul to God, and of uniting it, in the infallible bonds of the gospel, to the Redeemer of mankind. As the grand end and consummation of our enterprise, we wish thoroughly to Christianize the land in which we live, and to make the limits of the spiritual communion of the gospel co-extensive with the habitations of our people. And though, on the way to this great end, we may be blessed in gaining many subordinate objects in the present concerns of men, each of them exceedingly important; though we may promote, in various methods, the temporal happiness and prosperity of mankind ; we consider all these attainments as incomparably inferior. Our great and all-absorbing purpose is the salvation of immortal souls, and the building up of the kingdom and glory

of Emmanuel; "to show that he is the rock, and that there is no unrighteousness in him." This is the design, for the accomplishment of which our Sunday-schools are established, and for which every teacher in the land is, or should be, simply and intently labouring. To the attainment of this end, early religious instruction, and particularly the instruction of Sunday-schools, furnishes very important advantages.

2. In tracing these advantages in the operation of such instruction towards the securing of the ultimate piety of the soul which enjoys it, we find first the encouraging fact, that we are often entirely successful in the early accomplishment of our whole object. In the truly spiritual conversion of many of the youth of our land under Sunday-school instruction; in their final new birth for God, we do succeed, by the power of God, in whose hands we are the humble instruments, in "planting them in the house of the Lord," in uniting them as branches to the Lord's spiritual vine, that they may bring forth fruit for him. It is a well known fact, that there have been already, in the Sunday-schools of this country, many thousand children spiritually renewed for God. There probably is not a pastor in our land, whose affections, and time, and prayers have been given in any fair measure to this important part of his great work of winning souls, but can testify to the faithfulness of God, in his blessing upon this interesting portion of the flock. There is no part of the pastor's charge which so readily and surely rewards him for all the toil and effort which he devotes to it as the Sunday-school. It has appeared

to me, for several years, a remarkable and unaccountable oversight among many of the ministers of Christ, who, I doubt not, really feel an interest in the salvation of souls, that so little comparative attention has been given to what all my observation and judgment, as well as all my own experience, have united to convince me, is the most pliable portion of the subjects of their effort, and the field which renders them the most speedy and abundant harvest for the labour which is bestowed upon it. It is but a few years since this work began among us; very few years since it has assumed much of efficiency or shape; yet the subjects of God's renewing power, as here displayed, are already preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, at home and abroad; very many more are now preparing themselves for future usefulness as the ambassadors for Christ; and our schools, and colleges, and seminaries could this day give up to us some hundreds of instances of this description, in answer to our call for evidences of the divine favour resting upon our Sunday-schools. Each year as it passes by us, brings out to view new instances of precious youth, here begotten again to the enjoyment of a lively hope, through the divinely renovating power of the Spirit of Christ.

This fact is undoubted: and it presents an advantage in the operation of Sunday-school instruction, so prominent and so undeniable, that no serious mind can be supposed to undervalue it. What is so important in the history of man, as to determine the great question of his eternity in the morning of his life? What object, connected with him, can be so deeply interesting, as this early removal for him of all

cause for subsequent regret and sorrow, in the interests of his soul? this securing for God the affections and the powers of his untouched and unoccupied heart? What will so tend to annihilate the sorrows, and to promote the enjoyments, even of his present life? And this inestimable result our whole experience shows us we may attain, just in the proportion in which we devote our energies and prayers to the cultivation of this interesting field of labour. The blessed Spirit of God thus attends the communication of his truth and the study of his word. And increasing multitudes around us are testifying, that they have found with Timothy, that the Scriptures known from a child are able to make them wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. The connexion between early religious instruction and mature piety, at this step of our investigation, is too apparent to claim a prolonged notice. Such souls, converted in their youth, and bound early unto God, are most of all certain of "flourishing in the courts of our God," of "bringing forth fruit in old age," of being abiding monuments of the faithfulness and power of God. They secure for themselves most effectually the blessings of religion. They are habitually the most persevering in the path of holiness. They are the most useful to the souls of men, and the most honourable to God, in the great operations of the gospel on earth. They press forward to glory, having "an abundant entrance" into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Upon them the church of God depends for its messengers of mercy to the world. Upon them the world depends for its intelligence of salvation and

peace in Jesus Christ. The highest benefit that can be conferred upon the world is the conversion of the young. The most beneficent individuals in the world are they who are selected and blessed as instruments of accomplishing this important end.

3. But it will be said that, in a large number of instances, we do not gain this inestimable result. The children committed to us attain the age at which they leave this spiritual nursery, without a "heart right in the sight of God." Then, upon this supposition, another most important advantage of this system of effort is, that where we do not immediately gain the whole object, we lay the foundation and prepare the way for a subsequent restoration of their souls to God. They have, notwithstanding, gained immense benefits, upon their possession of which our hope delights to rest, as, under the faithful blessing of God, the probable instruments of a future blessing to their souls.

Their minds are stored with the truths of the holy word of God. They have acquired, and have laid up, a knowledge of the Scriptures—the facts, the doctrines, the instructions, the precepts of the Scriptures, which no other method ever devised could have imparted. They are thus, in their knowledge of spiritual things, wiser than their teachers could have been, before this system of useful effort was established. This is an advantage of incalculable importance. The Bible is made to them a familiar book. They pass on to their maturity well acquainted with its contents and communications. They are prepared to stand in their places in the society of men, with minds almost involuntarily

formed upon different principles, and acting upon a different system, from those who have had no such advantages. The mere speculative knowledge of Scripture truth which they have gained undoubtedly renders them far better qualified to discharge the present duties of life, and to fill up their measure of obligations to society, than any other preparation could have done. But mere temporal benefit is not the point to which I wish particularly to direct your notice. The truths of the word of God are, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the appointed means of man's renewal in holiness, after the image of God. And when we have laid up in the cells of memory, and in the repositories of the intellect, these blessed truths, we have done much towards preparing the way for the converting operation of the Divine Spirit, which shall "plant them in the house of the Lord."

Then the Bible is made to them a book of enjoyment. It is surrounded in their minds with the most attractive and pleasant associations. The way in which it has been brought before them has given to it a peculiar charm. Their acquirement of its instructions has been entirely voluntary. The connexions of the Sunday-school have called into exercise the kindest feelings of their nature, and chiefly developed the most precious and purest affections of their hearts. There is nothing gloomy or repulsive connected with the word of God in the associations of their minds. They can remember nothing in subsequent maturity, which was involved in the early presentation of religious truth to their minds, but that which bears the most pleasurable aspect. They will love to think of the paths in which their

childhood walked, with this blessed word as a lamp to their feet and a lantern to their steps. The way is thus prepared for the almost certain spiritual benefit of their future lives. The snares of infidelity will be spread in vain for them, for they are destitute of that *wish* that the Bible were false, which is the uniform preparation for its conquests. The temptations of profligacy and vice must contend with obstacles in their minds, generally insuperable, before they can gain a victory over what the Bible has done for them. The preaching and the influence of the gospel will find in them a readiness to hear, an ability to understand, and a likelihood to be profited by it, which is elsewhere so often wanting, and which is so encouraging as the harbinger of succeeding benefit. Should I go no farther than this, I can hardly conceive of a happier influence to be exercised upon our surrounding population, or a greater blessing to be bestowed upon our community, or a surer way to make our land eventually "Emmanuel's land," than thus intimately to acquaint the whole rising generation with the communications of the Scriptures, and to encircle those communications in their minds with the most agreeable feelings and thoughts; even though we were not allowed to see a single child really brought to God amidst the actually present efforts of the Sunday-school.

Then, under this instruction, children acquire a love for the ordinances of public worship, the institutions of the Lord's house. They have no other associations than those of pleasure and happiness connected with the religious services of the sanctuary. The Sabbath has not been to them a weary

day. Its successive arrival is attended with nothing that is repulsive. They grow up to the settled period and state of life with the feeling of gladness in going up to the house of the Lord more and more deeply engraven upon their hearts. They have been accustomed to find, and to look for, real enjoyment connected with it, and they expect it even in the maturity of life, with no other anticipation. There has been no cultivation of the disposition to sit down with the scornful, or to unite with those who scoff at sacred things. Now, who can doubt the importance of this attainment? Who can fail to see how much and how effectually it prepares the way for the subsequent conversion of the soul, and the renovation of the character for God? What benefit, short of the actual spiritual regeneration of them all, can be greater or of more importance in its consequences to our youth, and to our land, than to surround the blessed and life-giving ordinances of the gospel in their minds with attraction and pleasure. I know that there is often a danger of giving the "form of godliness, without the power thereof." I know, also, that some even think the giving the form of religion, without its spiritual power, a disadvantage, rather than a benefit. I can never accord with such a sentiment. I suppose in these remarks the heart to be still entirely unchanged; and yet I must speak of an acquired attachment to the ordinances and institutions of religious worship as a vast blessing, and a promising preparation for better things. In such a state of mind, there must be either the outward form of piety, or the outward form of sin; there must be either an attention to

religious services, or a neglect of them; our only choice is this alternative. I can have no hesitation in my preference; and I look to those portions of our land, where the experiments have been thoroughly tried, and tried in strong contrast, for the evidence upon which a judgment may be formed. The habits of early attendance upon religious services I have seen operating efficiently to prepare the way for the ultimate conversion of a large proportion of souls. And while the day of the Lord is so desecrated, and the ordinances of the gospel are so despised around me now, I look to the influence of our Sunday-schools for this inestimable benefit, the imparting to another generation now pressing forward to maturity, at least, a love and reverence for the outward institutions of the gospel: and I shall hail this result as a most likely preparation towards planting them finally in the house of the Lord.

Then the children in our Sunday-schools gain also a reverence for the ministry. This is a benefit of a kindred character with the former. They acquire a love for the pastor around whom they have gathered for instruction, not because they are taught to love him as a matter of duty, but because he has been always before their minds under an attractive and interesting form. He has ministered to their enjoyments; he has increased their pleasures; and there is implanted in their hearts an instinctive reverence for his character, and personal fondness for himself. The feeling of personal regard which is thus exercised towards him is applied also to the office which the pastor holds, and to the ministry on which he comes to them. Others in the same high

Office are welcomed with respect for his sake, and it becomes a principle within them, not easily eradicated, to think of and to receive the ministers of the Lord Jesus with the reverence which the Saviour has made their due. I deem this fact of incalculable worth in its probable bearing upon the piety of their *maturer* life. I trust I have no disposition to magnify my office for my own aggrandizement. But I cannot conceive, that any serious mind, amidst the circumstances of our country, can be willing to undervalue the stated Christian ministry. It is undoubtedly, and by divine appointment it is to be, the great instrument of rescuing and evangelizing the world. The vast interests of the souls of men must measure its importance. The developements of eternity will alone exhibit its actual operation and effects. And amidst the reckless contempt which in our time is so often thrown upon the living ministry, the ordinance of God, the acquiring for it the reverence and affection of the rising generation is equally a blessing to them and to the world. Towards the happy settlement of *their* character, and the ultimate attainment of the blessings of religion for *their* souls, it is an immense advantage. Towards the security of religious principles, and the perpetuating of them in other generations of our people, it is equally so.

These constitute a class of benefits which the instruction of the Sunday-school imparts, even where it has not been blessed of God to the actual spiritual conversion of the children while under its influence. They are benefits which are imparted, in a degree, almost mechanically and necessarily. They will be found to be so uniformly acquired under the pro-

posed influence, that I apprehend the cases which form exceptions to this rule will be few and uncommon. There must be great deficiency in the organization of the school, or unusual perverseness in the mind and character of the scholar, where at least these benefits are not secured, and these important ends attained. Now in gaining this point, we lay the foundation for their subsequent turning to the Lord ; we prepare his way, and, to a very great extent, remove the obstacles which true religion meets in the circumstances of men. And though, after all, the conversion of the soul of man is the simple result of sovereign grace, the work of the Holy Ghost ; and man has no right to speak of it as in any degree under his control for others ; yet it is doing much towards it to remove the obstacles which I have here presented ; and thus to prepare the way for the acceptable and saving operation of the truth of God. And this inestimable benefit we do indubitably gain, in the great majority of instances, among children who have been educated under the influence of the Sunday-school.

4. But I am prepared to go a step farther than this. Suppose we fail in gaining the blessings of true piety for these children in the active part of their maturity. Suppose the time at which the principles and character of men are generally settled passes by, and leaves them still under the dominion of that "carnal mind" which "is enmity with God;" we have not even then come to the issue of our experiment, and have no right to sit down at this point in despair of its good result. We still have conferred an unspeakable benefit in laying the foundation for

the easy accomplishment of a subsequent return to God. And even under this aspect, we can hardly over-estimate the importance or influence of early religious instruction. If after all our efforts to "plant them in the house of the Lord," our children should still grow up, even to old age, hardened and reckless,—and seem to be prepared for little else than, as despisers, to wonder and perish,—we have still deposited under this frozen surface a seed, in which there long remains the germ of life; and often, after a winter protracted even to old age has reigned in an unresisted dominion over it, the power of God may come down, and the clods will heave, and the fallow ground will be broken up, and the dews of heavenly grace will nourish and bring out the little feeble plant which is striving to force its upward way. We certainly lay a foundation in the mind in early religious instruction, which, whatever may be built upon it by the power of the world and sin, will itself remain. And the time will come when all this superincumbent mass shall be again thrown off, and the foundation which was thus early laid shall be again exposed to view. God has been pleased so to constitute the mind of man, that, in old age, it involuntarily forgets the bustling concerns of its maturity, and spontaneously and habitually recurs to the annals of its youth. The events of that period are now brought back more near than the concerns of yesterday, and the memory can recall facts and circumstances in all the freshness of their first occurrence which have been long forgotten, and as it might have been supposed, forgotten forever. Then, when in these latter days of

sickness or age, distress and anguish come upon them, and the goadings of sorrow drive them to think of a neglected God, there is found in their own minds a knowledge of truth which, as an anchor, will hold them fast to better things, provided by the kindness which taught them the way and the word of God in the days of their youth.

I would have this illustration well understood. Two persons, it may be in the last periods of life, under the influence of whatever immediate cause, become anxious for their souls, eager for their salvation, and determined to escape from the wrath to come. They have been equally profligate, and hardened, and atheistic in the past current of their life. Their course in vice may have been an excessive one. The eye could discern no circumstance of distinction in the progress and accumulation of their iniquity. But, one of them had the advantage of religious instruction, Sunday-school instruction, which the other had not. Now mark the different process and result in their attempts to return to God. The one, when awakened to reflection, is able to throw off immediately the load of error and guilt which has been accumulating through his life, and to cast himself back upon the foundation which was laid in his youth. Better principles than those upon which he has practised have been laid at the bottom of his mind, and they will, upon his search, at once present themselves to view, and start forth into immediate growth. He recurs to them; and with the advantage of their influence, he may be easily and readily established in the way of truth. The Bible shines out before him, with rays of light

starting from hundreds of passages which were impressed upon his infant understanding. Exhortations and advice, that have been forgotten by every one, save now by himself, are resuscitated in his conscience. He has nothing to forget, but that which, according to the constitution of his nature, is most easily forgotten. He has nothing to remember, but that which this wise ordinance of God helps him to recall. He is able to take his stand instantly on the foundation of the gospel. He may become immediately an efficient helper in the work of the gospel. He blesses God, and he blesses the teachers who were the instruments of God, with a feeling which words cannot utter, for the inestimable advantage which this early instruction has conferred upon him. It may even be called in the language of our text, though it was so long a time before he began to grow, "a planting him in the house of the Lord." I have known this experiment evidencing this result, I think at the distance of at least thirty intermediate years of sinful and profligate rebellion against God. The other of these two awakened sinners attempts also to throw off this acquired weight of guilt, and to find his way to God. But then with him there is nothing left. His mind in regard to all religious knowledge and impressions is a total wilderness. He has no early principles. He has been taught nothing of God, or the will of God. He has no knowledge of the Bible, no acquaintance with religious institutions, and no anchor of truth in his mind. He becomes the likely prey to every ambushed error. And perhaps he long wanders consuming himself in the speculations of a distorted

intellect, questioning and doubting about every thing that claims his submission; perhaps he finally wanders, is lost in the snares of some deluding heresy, and never finds the way of truth and holiness. His religion, at the best, is generally so unsettled, that he is comparatively useless, and his mind is so unfurnished, that he cannot venture to instruct any. Now the difference in the result between these two persons is immense and most important. But the only circumstance which makes the difference is the privilege of early religious instruction given to the one, and the want of it in the other. And this is a circumstance which will certainly affect the residue of the present life of each with a most important influence, and probably be found to operate upon their experience for eternity. If then we could do nothing more by our Sunday-school instruction, than thus to lay the foundation for comfort and safety in a late return to God, the benefit of it is beyond our power to calculate, and ought never to be undervalued.

In tracing the operation of religious instruction in its influence upon the mature and ultimate piety of men through these three successive steps, I do not profess to have done more than to make some suggestions, which the better judgment and the riper intelligence of others may improve and carry out to far greater advantage. I believe I shall be allowed to have spoken in conformity to the actual experience and observation of many who hear me; I believe, too, in conformity with what will be the universal judgment, upon this subject, of sound and practical men who consider it. These suggestions

cannot fail, I think, to show the vast importance of early religious instruction, and especially (because the benefits which have been specified come more particularly from it, and some of them exclusively from it) of Sunday-school instruction. They will have their designed effect, if they shall tend to excite any to greater interest in this important Christian enterprise ; to quicken the diligence of Sunday-school teachers in their undertaking; or to direct the notice of my brethren in the ministry of the gospel, more distinctly and permanently, to the influence which it ought to receive from their supervision and encouragement, and the influence which it must have upon the results of their ministry for the souls of men.

II. Let me proceed to speak, as the second general topic of our meditation, of the foundation upon which we cherish this expectation of benefits from early religious instruction. The psalmist expresses it in a feeling which we would gladly cultivate, and in language that we would never forget. It is “to show that the Lord is upright, he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.” Our simple confidence in this, and in all enterprises which concern the honour of God, and the building up of his kingdom on the earth, is in the faithfulness of God. We are acting among men as the instruments of his gracious providence, and we are to be prospered in doing them good only by the special gift and power of his Holy Spirit. We do not suppose that there is any inherent power in the “letter” of the Scripture to convert the souls of men; or that even by its

arguments merely, the proud heart and the carnal mind of the sinner are to be persuaded into subjection unto God. We suppose it to be "the Spirit" alone which giveth life; and we look for a saving efficacy in the instructions of the word of God, only because we have the gracious promise of the Spirit to accompany and to bless it. Under this promise, realizing that God alone giveth the increase; believing that his word shall not return unto him void; expecting the gift of the Holy Spirit when we ask for it; looking for the time when all his children shall be taught of him; feeling sure that he is with his servants alway, even unto the end of the world, we trust to the faithfulness of his promise, "The Lord is upright, abiding as a rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." And whenever the souls of men are renewed for him, it stands as an evidence to man of the faithfulness of the Most High. Resting upon this attribute of the Lord, we hope for large and glorious results from the dissemination of the revelations of his word. And though his promises attach not particularly to the Sunday-schools, they do attach to the communications of his sacred truth to men, which is the grand object of Sunday-school instruction, and for the effectual attainment of which it is so peculiarly adapted. And because this system of labour is an honouring of his word, and depends simply upon the instrumentality of that, which all its efforts are calculated to impress, we have the right to appropriate especially to this course of labour, those blessed promises which proclaim the future universal dominion of truth and righteousness among men. And we may say, with

out any straining of the Scripture, that our success in this effort tends to show that the Lord, who is our rock, is upright and faithful. We go forth to our task with the Bible in our hands, and beseeching the special gift of his Spirit, to sanctify, in the time and season which we leave in his power and to his choice, the words we speak for him; and we confidently look for a time when the seed which is sown in the hearts of our children shall spring forth, to blossom and bear fruit to his glory.

Added to the encouragement which his word gives us, is all the animating experience of his people. This has been, in every age, upon the side of the suggestions which I have presented in this discourse. You can hardly select the biography of a distinguished and useful man of God, which is not an instance of the efficiency of early religious instruction. In some, the benefit is immediate and progressive. In others, the commencement of apparent growth is not until after a season of guilt and folly has passed by. But all unite to ascribe the blessing of God upon their souls, and through them upon others, to this simple but efficient source. Such instances are so numerous and so familiar to you all, that it would be useless to recount them. They have come down upon us in such a current of testimony, that we have authority to say, the general experience of the people of God establishes our hope of the connexion between early religious instruction and mature piety, of which I have spoken at this time.

In addition to the experience which other Christians have had, and the testimony which they have

given upon this subject, we have all the encouragement of our own observation. Who among us has ever made this effort in vain? What Sunday-school teacher, who has entered upon his sacred task with God, and has abode in it with God, has found disappointment to his hopes, and discouragement to his heart, from the failure of these expectations of benefit to others? What pastor, who has at all laid himself out to edify and cultivate this department of his spiritual charge, has found himself labouring entirely without comfort or success? What church, that has attempted to nurse and watch over the children whom God has committed to its care, and has urged its members to a personal and persevering engagement in the duty of their instruction, has found God absent from the effort, and the Spirit of God refusing to bless it?

Were there no arguments from our own success or from the success of others, we should still be bound to go forward, relying upon the simple faithfulness of God. If he hath spoken, it should be enough for us. But all encouragements combine to assure us, that we are doing here a great work, and that it is by no means without the Lord, that we have undertaken it, or are prosecuting it to its conclusion. Such is my established confidence in this effort, and my judgment, not formed hastily, or without opportunity of observation, that I am fully convinced no single instrument in the hands of the Spirit for doing good to men, and for building up the kingdom of Christ in our day, will be found in the end to have accomplished an equal amount of gainful result, for the degree of labour and expenditure which it has

cost. I count it most peculiarly a Christian enterprise, and one which will certainly meet the continued blessing of that gracious Being, who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," and "take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

III. The conclusion of this course of remark leads me to urge the claims of the Sunday-school enterprise, and of the American Sunday-school Union, upon the attention of my hearers.

I place the general claim first, because I feel upon this whole subject, as do the managers of this Union, that our great object is to promote and to build up Sunday-schools, without reference to this particular instrumentality, and that our attachment to this latter is wholly on the ground of its tested adaptation to the attainment of the former. It is impossible that an association like this should have reference to the peculiar wants of every denomination of Christians in our land. And it is therefore expedient and desirable that each denomination should undertake for itself the supply of its distinctive wants in the doctrinal instruction of its youth. We would see every Christian engaged in the personal work of Sunday-school instruction, and every child in our land partaking of its benefits. And if these schools can be supplied with the aid they need, more effectually from the arrangements of their own ecclesiastical connexion, the American Sunday-school Union will take the

same interest in assisting them, and will give them the same advantages from their co-operation, as if they were in single dependence upon themselves. This is not an union of denominations, nor bearing any ecclesiastical character whatever. It is an union of private individuals for a public benefit. It is a personal combination to supply, in the most advantageous manner which shall be found possible, the means for establishing and sustaining Sunday-schools throughout every Christian denomination, and in every section of this land, without interfering, in any measure, with the wishes or the views of any. It is to supply for all, that amount of Christian instruction, and the materials to disseminate it, which all may easily accept, and which shall be opposed to the views of none. Under such circumstances, when I urge for them the great duty of Sunday-school instruction, I fulfil the plan and desire upon which they design to act.

But the more I have considered the benevolent character, and the beneficent operation, and the very peculiar adaptation to usefulness and success, of their special effort, the more am I convinced of their just claim to the liberal and persevering co-operation of Christians of every name. This Union, I am persuaded, has done more towards correcting and sanctifying the juvenile reading of our country, and towards furnishing healthful and useful books for the minds of our children, than all other persons whatsoever combined. I have been for several years stationed, by the providence of God, at the seat of its operations, and have thoroughly marked the influence of its plans. The gentlemen who

are engaged in it have given an amount of gratuitous labour and attention to the sustaining of the important effort, which I am convinced no other benevolent institution of our land demands. They have, besides, always been themselves the largest contributors to the funds upon which they have acted. In their arrangement of provisions for future usefulness, there has been a liberal and prudent system. There are now prepared the materials and machinery for carrying forward this happy undertaking to any conceivable extent, with far less expense to the Christian community than any other arrangement could propose. Their library, of five hundred religious and interesting books for children, might be readily increased to one thousand; and their large number, of near one million of children in schools, to twice that number, if they should be sustained and encouraged, as they ought to be, by the Christian community. The fruit of this vine is but just ripening. The arrangements for carrying forward this enterprise are but just coming to maturity. And the American Sunday-school Union was never better prepared to meet the increasing wants of the country, or to expend with advantage the increasing pecuniary assistance of the Christian community, than now. Under the control of business-laymen alone, there is no possible danger either of ecclesiastical domination or interference. If it is said to be a mere book concern, let it not be forgotten that the only stockholders are the whole community of Christians, and they reap all the profit of the establishment. Let the publications of this Union be examined; let the system upon which it

acts be understood; let the results which it has accomplished be weighed; and I can hardly suppose that any Christian will come to any other conclusion than my own; that, for the spiritual blessing of our rising generation, it is a precious gift of God to our country, and claims for its enlargement and support the united efforts of Christians of every name. In supporting it, we sacrifice no principle and no attachment. We do good to ourselves in doing equal good to all others. In neglecting it, as some seem disposed to do, we can gain no benefit. We lose the advantages which it gives. We can in no other quarter supply their place.

THE END.

*The happy Adaptation of the Sabbath-school System to the peculiar
Wants of our Age and Country.*

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED

AT THE REQUEST OF THE BOARD OF MANAGERS OF THE AMERICAN SUNDAY
SCHOOL UNION,

PHILADELPHIA, MAY 20th, 1839.

BY S. S. SCHMUCKER, D. D.

PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
AT GETTYSBURG, PA.

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.....

1839.

A SERMON.

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”—Proverbs xxii. 6.

THE words which we have selected as the basis of our discussion on this solemn occasion, inculcate an important and well-established fact in the history of the human mind. They must not, however, be interpreted too literally, as is evident from the life of the very individual who penned them. Solomon himself, though early taught “the way in which he should go,” when he became old, did certainly and most grievously depart from it. The fact inculcated by our text is not a law of inert, physical nature, resulting solely from the omnipotent and resistless agency of the Creator upon unintelligent matter, and therefore always invariably the same. It is true the planetary orbs, though some of them occupy years in completing their revolution, reach their starting point without the variation of a single second ; and though they speed their course millions of miles through the regions of space, deviate not an inch from their appointed track. But the law, or fact, spoken of in our text, is of a different character. It refers to moral influence exerted on moral agents, on intelligent beings, whom God, for reasons of the greatest good, has determined to constitute and continue voluntary agents through life. And all experience shows that the effects of moral

means cannot be graduated by pounds and ounces like the power of steam, nor measured by inches and miles like the revolutions of the heavenly orbs. Accordingly religious education does not secure a religious after-life with the same absolute certainty with which matter gravitates towards the greater mass, or the planetary bodies revolve around their centre. But the text expresses the indisputable fact, which you have all seen exemplified in daily life, that *the inculcation of religious truth on the pliant mind of youth, is naturally adapted to produce a salutary influence; and that, aided by divine grace, it generally secures the fidelity of its recipients in subsequent life.*

The truth of this doctrine is clearly seen in the life of individuals and in the history of the church.

When we listen to the testimony of ecclesiastical historians on the great fidelity of the early Christians in instructing candidates for church privileges, when we hear them say that from six months to two years were spent in specific preparatory training, we need not wonder at their devotedness to the cause and their fidelity amid persecutions; but must acknowledge the salutary influence of ample and careful religious instruction even in later years, if it was not given in early life. In the middle ages religious instruction was much neglected. Although some edicts were passed in the earlier part of this period, such as those of the synod of Maynz, in the reign of Charlemagne, encouraging parents to send their children to school, and exhorting parents themselves to learn the Apostles' creed, and the Lord's prayer, which, says the edict, every Christian should know; and although this same century (the ninth) produced the first German

catechism, by Ottfried ; the religious instruction of the young participated largely, both as cause and effect, in the darkness of the dark ages. Yet even this period presents a duplicate illustration of the doctrine of our text, in the degeneracy of the Romish church on the one hand, where religious education was neglected ; and on the other, in the devotedness and spiritual prosperity of those memorable witnesses for the truth, the Waldenses, whose children were most carefully taught an elementary course of Christian instruction which is still extant, and for doctrinal purity and evangelical spirit more resembles a Protestant production of the seventeenth or eighteenth century, than of the twelfth.

In the age of the blessed Reformation, that most interesting period since the days of the apostles, fraught with consequences not even yet fully developed, more general attention was devoted to religious education. One of the principal means of perpetuating that memorable ecclesiastical revolution, was the careful training of the rising generation in the unadulterated doctrines of the Bible. Luther gave a new impulse to this cause by publishing two catechisms, one for children and the other for teachers: because, as he himself states, he found a most lamentable ignorance among both, during the visitation of the churches, undertaken by order of the Elector John. Calvin also prepared a catechism in French, and subsequently translated it into Latin, which was long in high repute, though not adopted by his followers in England or in this country. And with what fidelity and manifest fruits the different Protestant churches in other countries, and especially the church in Scot-

land, laboured to train their children in the way they should go, is well known.

During the thirty years' war, whilst Protestants were supporting a desperate and unequal struggle for existence against the encroachments of the Papists, in which Sweden's noble-hearted monarch poured out his blood upon the plains of Lutzen, a generation grew up whose education was unavoidably neglected ; and their influence was felt in the prevalence of vice, in the languishing state of piety in the church, in the dead formality and imbibited contentions which shook the very foundations of Protestantism. Spener, the father of the modern revival of religion in Germany, also revived attention to this neglected subject in later times, and with his name may justly be associated those of Watts, Franke, Teller, Seidel, Loescher, and others. In short, the benign and blessed influence of religious education, even when imperfectly given, is always evident ; but to no mode of instruction can we appeal with more confidence for triumphant demonstrations of this truth, than to the short and simple, but at the same time the rich and fruitful annals of the American Sunday-school Union, on whose behalf we are now assembled. This system has its peculiarities ; the age in which we live has its peculiarities ; we are, in a national point of view, "a peculiar people ;" and as it would seem to be not an unapt theme, we purpose on this occasion to exhibit

THE HAPPY ADAPTATION OF THE SABBATH-SCHOOL SYSTEM TO THE PECULIAR WANTS OF OUR AGE AND COUNTRY.

The Sabbath-school system is truly a noble institution. It created no new elements in the human soul,

and discovered none that were unknown before ; but, by a most felicitous combination of arrangements, it calls into full play the whole intellectual and moral machinery of the youthful mind, and employs the long dormant resources of the Christian community in an admirable manner. This system has its peculiarities. When faithfully carried out, according to the principles of the American Sunday-school Union, it may be characterized as giving prominence to the Bible, as being free from sectarianism, as reaching the entire population, as employing also lay agency, and as beginning with the earliest age.

Before the era of Sunday-schools, the duty of religious instruction was supposed to appertain only to ministers, and, in some countries, also to the village schoolmaster. But since the happy conception of the immortal Raikes, the whole body of Christians may be literally "priests unto God," the number of instructors can be multiplied to any desirable extent, and the purifying, elevating, saving knowledge of the truth of God, be carried to every inmate of every hovel in the land. Indeed the felicitous tendency of this system to improve the public morals, to diminish the business of our criminal courts, to empty our jails and penitentiaries, and to fill our churches, is a matter of statistical demonstration, and stands confessed by all. Let us contemplate some definite features of this tendency.

I. *The Sabbath-school system is well adapted to correct the prevailing disregard of law and constituted authorities, and thus to invigorate the protective influence of our government.*

The duties resulting from the social compact never

have been and never will be faithfully discharged by a people destitute of integrity, of moral honesty. In despotic and arbitrary governments the absence of this moral principle is in some degree compensated by what are termed the five strong points of monarchy, a hereditary monarch, a nobility, a standing army, an established church, and a strong police. But in a republic, whose cardinal features are the direct antitheses of these points, in which all power is ultimately wielded by the *people*, it is evident that the destiny of the government is indissolubly linked to the character of the people, and the grand pillars which must sustain the fabric, are industry, intelligence, and, above all, virtue among the mass of the population. But moral integrity has never prevailed in any nation, without some religion. For the belief of a God, and of rewards and punishments, in the administration of which our secret conduct will be brought into retribution, lies at the very foundation of popular virtue. It is this that confers sanctity upon an oath; to this we are chiefly indebted for whatever honesty is found in our legislative halls, for whatever justice and impartiality are witnessed in the administration of our civil and judiciary institutions. If, then, the celebrated Greek historian Polybius could with truth applaud the imperfect religion of pagan Rome, and pronounce it the most important among all her useful institutions, and that which chiefly sustained the republic; with how much greater propriety may we transfer the same praises to the purer and far nobler religion of the gospel !

But the population of this infant republic is exposed to various and peculiar demoralizing influences. The

immense resources of our country, which are daily opening before us, and presenting to all the alluring, the dazzling, the bewildering prospect of speedy wealth, have a natural tendency to unsettle the minds of any people, to destroy their industry and beget habits of speculation, of corruption, injustice, and dishonesty. Wealth also, when attained, tends to idleness, extravagance, and luxury. Nor have we only our indigenous evils to contend with. Exotic vices are daily transplanted to our land by the vast multitudes of foreigners who are annually flowing in upon us, and introducing every form of iniquity which has sprung up on the rank soil of European degeneracy. Our population, therefore, stands in special need of religious influence, of an influence which shall embrace within its kindly sympathies the entire population, and especially the poor and vicious, who either will not, or cannot provide instruction for themselves. But by what means can the entire population be thus reached, except by Sabbath-schools? You all reply, by none. Catechization by the pastor of each church is indeed a highly valuable practice, and has accomplished great good. But it has never reached much beyond the children of the church. Nothing ever brought the great mass of the rising generation under the influence of gospel tuition until Sabbath-schools accomplished the glorious work. They are therefore, under God, our best reliance amid the dangers which threaten our infant republic on every side. The scenes of popular violence, the mobs, the Lynch processes, the riots of every kind which disgrace the recent annals of our country, and have made our most enlightened statesmen tremble for the safety

of the republic, are all the fruits of popular ignorance, and popular depravity, of recklessness of duty, and disregard of constituted authorities, resulting from destitution of religious principle. Let, therefore, the true patriot, let every friend of his country contribute his influence and his aid to the cause of Sabbath-schools, until they are established in every corner of our entire land, and until the whole mass of our rising population, and especially of emigrants, is brought within their control, and taught from divine authority that "the powers that be are ordained of God, and whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God;" until they are taught to pray for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; taught to be afraid to do evil, because the civil ruler beareth not the sword in vain, but acts as the minister of that God who will hereafter himself become a terror to evil doers, even if they escape their merited punishment on earth!

II. Sabbath-schools tend to perpetuate the separation between church and state, and turn it to the highest advantage of spiritual religion.

This opinion may, perhaps, appear singular, to those who have gleaned all their knowledge on this subject from the unprincipled assertions of political demagogues; but its truth will become evident upon a few moments' serious examination of facts. Our blessed Saviour himself distinctly interdicted such a union. To his disciples, who at first expected the Messiah to be a temporal prince, he says explicitly: "my kingdom is not of this world," is not a temporal kingdom. He told them that the kingdom which he came to establish was not at all inconsistent with

their allegiance to the Roman emperor, and therefore, it was right that, as citizens of his kingdom, they should pay tribute to the emperor, and thus "give unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

He nowhere either authorizes or directs ministers of the gospel to exercise any political power by virtue of their religious office. He nowhere authorizes political officers, as such, to interfere in the affairs of his church, or to exercise any power in it. On the contrary, for every duty enjoined on the church, he has also appointed some individual in the church, on whom its performance devolves. The idea, that the civil ruler of a country who succeeds to office by hereditary descent, without the shadow of security even for decent morality of character, should in any sense be the head of that people who are to be separated from the world as a peculiar people, zealous of good works, and from whose midst every one is to be ejected who violates the precepts of our holy religion, is too preposterous to need comment at the present day. And that such an officer, who is appointed without any ecclesiastical qualifications, should be the source of all ecclesiastical power to others, and the judge of ecclesiastical qualifications in them, will be admitted by all to be, in view of the New Testament, an ecclesiastical absurdity. Such are the doctrines of Christianity concerning the union between church and state, held by the entire body of Protestant Christians in our land. What better method then can be adopted to prevent this evil than to bring the whole mass of our rising population under the influence of the Scriptures, which inculcate these views?

The paramount, the almost indelible influence of the early inculcation of opinions which we wish to perpetuate, is well understood by all who are acquainted with human nature. On this subject politicians might learn a profitable lesson from the late Emperor of the French. When Napoleon desired to place his ill-gotten imperial power on a firm basis, he ordered the dignitaries of the Romish church to prepare a catechism, including a chapter in which his right to the imperial crown was expressly taught on the ground of his having been called to the throne by God, in times of peculiar difficulty, and endowed for this purpose with extraordinary civic and military talents. Such a catechism was actually prepared. It was published in 1806, with the sanction of Caprara, the pope's legate, and with the emperor's decree prefixed, ordering it to be introduced into all the churches: the frequency and extent of the emperor's wars, however, allowed little time for the instruction even of children.

But Sabbath-schools have not merely the advantage of being the only method by which the entire rising population of our country can be imbued with correct views on this subject; they have the farther recommendation of being taught, not by ministers, who, if unprincipled men, might regard it as their private interest to inculcate different views, but by laymen themselves, whose interest must always lie on the side of opposition to this union; for it is from the body of the people, both Christians and others, that power and wealth are wrested by it, to be conferred on the clergy. Accordingly, although the union between church and state has existed about fifteen hundred

years in nearly all the nations of Europe; *it never has been in a single instance, and never will be introduced by the voice of the body of Christians.* It was originally established by the unlimited power of one man, the Emperor Constantine, from reasons of state policy; for, whatever may have been the subsequent improvement of his character, he certainly could not have been a Christian, at a time when he was making large donations to heathen temples, when he celebrated the apotheosis of his father, and appeared in public decorated with the insignia of Jupiter and Mars, of Hercules and Apollo. Christians had become too numerous in the empire to be either suppressed or despised. They were moreover his most trusty and faithful subjects. Their religion was calculated to impress the same character on all who embraced it, and therefore its avowal by the court was wise and politic. The same considerations seem to have weighed, more or less, with Theodosius the first and second, with Theodoric and Justinian, who confirmed the union by additional enactments.

It is from political demagogues, and not from the mass of Christians in our country, whose interest is entirely different, that we have most to fear. Do we not, even now, find party leaders addressing the prejudices of particular denominations to gain their votes and enlist their influence? These are the men who may, in the course of time, find their advantage in secretly promising certain preferences to corrupt ecclesiastical leaders, first by favouring their sect in appointments to office, and eventually in something more permanent. That a Protestant population, well educated in the principles of Christianity, with the

sad experience of former ages of grievance from this union before them, could be induced again voluntarily to bow their necks to the yoke, and re-establish that union now happily severed, is scarcely within the bounds of credibility, especially when we recollect the lesson taught by history, that power once granted to the many is never voluntarily returned to the few.

But Christians should advocate the divorce of church and state, and encourage Sabbath-schools as the best means of perpetuating it, for additional reasons. That union is an almost insuperable obstacle to the highest spiritual improvement of the church, and the speedy dissemination of the gospel over the earth. The situation of the minister who is supported by the state, and who may be dismissed at pleasure, is very unfavourable to the impartial and fearless inculcation of the truth on those from whom he derives his daily bread. There is unavoidably an influence thrown around the dependent servant of Christ, which prevents him from fully applying the principles of Christianity to the maxims of civil government, and to the conduct of civil officers. But it was the design of the Saviour, that his religion should reach and mould the character of all men, of governors as well as governed ; and that it should purify and elevate and regulate all the relations and institutions of the human family, not only social and domestic, literary and scientific, but also civil and political. Christianity has effected much to purify the social and domestic relations of men. She has elevated the condition of the female sex from degradation and cruelty to refinement and influence ; she has mitigated the severity of the criminal code ; she has banished suicide ; she has

established associations to support the poor and to alleviate almost every form of human suffering ; but she has failed to do as much for political governments. The dependence of her ministers on political rulers has prevented them from applying so fully the precepts of Christianity to political governments. The mother of all evils, war, that evil which brings in its train every other, which always stops the progress of piety and throws back the car of the Redeemer, can scarcely be said to be sensibly diminished in frequency. Yet holy seers have predicted that when Christianity prevails over the earth, men shall convert their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and shall learn war no more. If the wars in which Christians are embroiled, were always waged with some adjoining *heathen* nation, the latter might, in charity, be supposed the aggressors. But Christians have been almost constantly at war with Christians, and consequently their Christianity is not yet such as will prevail in that time, when we shall hear “of wars and rumours of war no more.” Where church and state are separated, ministers and private Christians are under no restraint in dissenting from the views of their rulers ; they have no private interest that will be sacrificed, their only interest is that of their common country. Even in a limited monarchy, therefore, if the popular branch of the government controls the purse, the people can greatly diminish the frequency of wars ; but in a republican government, like ours, where the people, through their representatives, both declare and conduct wars, if the mass of the people be deeply imbued by the spirit of the Saviour, it is in the power of a single generation to

usher in millennial peace ! The practice of Christian wars, or rather let me say antichristian war, by so-called Christian nations, has been a melancholy impediment to the bloodless triumphs of the gospel among the heathen ! Listen to the reason assigned by the late Emperor of China for refusing to admit the Christian religion into his empire ? Hear it, O Christian people, and blush ! “*Because,*” said he, “*wherever Christians go, they whiten the soil with human bones.*” And a Turk, at Jerusalem, once said to Mr. Wolff the missionary, who lately visited this country, “Why do you come to us ?” The missionary replied, “To bring you peace.” “Peace,” replied the Turk, leading Mr. Wolff to a window, and pointing him to Mount Calvary, “there, upon the very spot where your Lord poured out his blood, the Mohammedan is obliged to interfere to prevent Christians from shedding the blood of each other ! !” O ! if Christians had but acted out their principles as nations, and Christianity, as she traversed the different countries, had put an end to wars and bloodshed, I verily believe the moral omnipotence of this single feature would have long since convinced the heathen world of its heaven-descended origin ; would have opened, not only the Chinese empire for the reception of the Prince of peace, but also every heathen nation on the globe ; for it is well known that even the heathen populace regard war as the greatest of evils ; and for this very reason the heathen people would have welcomed Christianity even where their rulers felt no interest in it.

But time would fail me to enumerate all the evils of this unhappy and unholy alliance. It destroyed

the primitive simplicity of Christianity, and introduced pomp and splendour into the worship of that Saviour who had not where to lay his head. It gave undue authority to the decision and prescriptions of synods and councils; for they were issued under imperial sanction, and even Constantine himself already enforced absolute submission to them. Let, therefore, Christians earnestly labour against this antichristian conversion of the Saviour's kingdom into a kingdom of this world, and instil these views into the minds of the rising generation as an important topic of Sabbath-school instruction.

III. The Sabbath-school system is admirably adapted *to train up a generation of Christians for millennial plans and millennial action.*

It is admitted that in the halcyon days of millennial triumph, the minor peculiarities of sect will be thrown into the background, and Christians meet on the broad platform of the Bible: that they will give prominence to the things in which they agree; that they will husband their resources by fraternal concert and co-operation; and that gigantic schemes will be undertaken for the conversion of the world. Now it must be obvious to all that the Sabbath-school system of the American Sunday-school Union, if faithfully carried out, is happily adapted to answer all these indications.

It makes the book of God the principal book of instruction. The Bible was the grand instrument of the reformation of the sixteenth century, and will, doubtless, be equally blessed in accelerating the millennial reign. Hitherto, the Bible has not been brought fully to bear on the character of the mass of our community. It is indeed the opprobrium of Christian

nations, that they adopt the Bible rather by profession than practice. Whilst in Mohammedan countries, the Koran, with all its absurdities, is the book of instruction in all their institutions, and studied by all classes and ages, the Scriptures are rarely taught in our schools. The consequence is, that whilst the entire nations professing Mohammedanism are instructed in their religion and become Mohammedan nations, not one-tenth part of our population is instructed in the Scriptures. The book of God is not fairly brought into contact with the national mind, and we are not a Christian *nation* in the same degree in which Mohammedan nations are nations of Mohammedans! Christian institutions spend ten times as much time in the study of heathen authors, as of the book of books. Christian students are often more deeply imbued with the spirit of heathenism than of Christianity, filled with more admiration for the military achievements of a Cesar, a Hannibal, or an Alexander, than for the sublime, the forgiving spirit of the Prince of peace, in whose view those military heroes are little else than national murderers! In short, there is but too much truth in the charge that we profess one religion, and educate our youth in another. But Sabbath-schools are happily calculated to remedy the defect. In them the Bible is the chief book of instruction, it is taught by serious and religious persons; it may be extended to the youth of the whole nation, and cannot fail to exert a most benign influence on us as a Christian people. If Sabbath-schools were universally introduced, and the Scriptures were taught in our common schools, and if our colleges and academies would exclude the immoral and antichristian portions of the

classics, and introduce in their stead more extensive study of the word of God, of its history, its archeology, its philology, its cardinal doctrines and duties, we doubt not that incalculable gain would accrue to the cause of truth and holiness, and the standard of Christianity be visibly raised.

Again, the Sabbath-school system *gives prominence to the common ground of Protestant doctrine*, and particularly demonstrates, that the things in which we agree are not only sufficient for salvation, but also for ecclesiastical acknowledgment and fraternity. From the books which the American Sunday-school Union circulates are carefully excluded all topics of sectarian difference. The publication committee embraces members of at least four Christian denominations; and every thing is excluded to which either member of the committee objects. The great doctrines of salvation are thus inscribed on almost every page, and the minds of youth are imbued not with sectarianism but with a species of Christianity that is current in all denominations, that species of Christianity concerning which Irenæus boasted that it was "believed by the whole church, dispersed over all the world, from one end of the earth to the other."

Again, *Sabbath-schools conducted on the plan of the American Union will prepare the churches to avoid dissension about minor differences, and to husband their strength by fraternal concert and co-operation; will lead to the conception of gigantic schemes for the conversion of the world, and enable every man, woman, and child that loves the Lord, to engage in their execution.* The sameness of the principal books used, the monthly concert of Sabbath-

school teachers of different denominations, in our cities, and towns, and villages, and the occasional collection of the children of different schools for public anniversaries or other purposes, all tend to produce unity of spirit among the future soldiers of the cross, all tend to prepare them for cordial acknowledgment, and co-operation for advancing the cause of the Redeemer. Thus imbibing a spirit of universal love to the image of Christ wherever found, and cultivating an expanded sympathy for all the heathen world that is destitute of that image, and enveloped in superstition and wretchedness ; and imbibing their principles of duty immediately from the millennial scale of the Bible, they will be trained up a set of labourers adapted for millennial schemes and millennial action ! The Bible has always been a millennial book, its standard of duty has always been a millennial standard ; but, after the apostolic age, and until of late, men contemplated its scale of duty and enterprise as through a glass darkly. God has opened the eyes of many. A higher and holier scale of duty is now regulating their works of faith and love. A more expansive spirit of benevolence is beginning to mark out the circumference of their sympathies. A few gigantic schemes have been conceived and executed. The nation has been supplied with Bibles; something was done to supply the country with Sabbath-schools. Other schemes remain to be devised. The next step should be definitely to undertake to supply our continent instead of our nation, with Sabbath-schools, with Bibles, with tracts, and with teachers : the object should be definitely kept in view and prosecuted to its attainment, and when a continent has thus been supplied, a similar

resolution should be jointly adopted by evangelical Christians in this country and Europe, to supply the world. The first step was thought by many to be visionary; but, under God, it was accomplished. The others, though now they seem, to many, as idle tales and they believe them not, would be as easy to Him who has the hearts of men in his hands; and though they would require more time and greater self-denial and devotion, they are all within the reach of sober calculation, and would only require Christians generally to do as much as some individual Christians are now doing.

Such, then, being the character and tendency of the Sabbath-school system, how powerful, how universal are its claims upon us! Do we profess to be patriots, and love the liberties of our country? Then let us aid the cause of Sabbath-schools, that the rising generation of our land, and especially those who are under counter influences, may be well instructed in that republican book, the Bible; that they may all learn from divine authority, that neither the pope nor any temporal ruler, but that Jesus Christ alone is the head of the church; that his kingdom is not a temporal kingdom, and ought not be connected with the state. Are we philanthropists, and do we mourn over the miseries inflicted on our race by vice and immorality, by ~~injustice and oppression~~, and, above all, by that mother of all evils, that advocate of all violence and oppression, that lasting obstacle to the reign of the Redeemer, *war*? Then let us advocate Sabbath-schools to indoctrinate the nation with the principles of the Prince of peace, whose religion teaches goodwill to men, teaches all to avoid every vice, to love

justice, and to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us. Do we cherish the hope of being Christians, then let our inmost souls be engaged in the cause of Sabbath-schools, as one of the most successful instrumentalities which God has owned for scattering salvation throughout our land and our world; an instrumentality twice blessed, blessed in giving and blessed in receiving instruction; an instrumentality available by all, by the rich and the poor, the old and the young, by males and females, either as teachers or contributors of moral or pecuniary aid; an instrumentality, finally, which bids fair to fill the church of Christ with faithful members, the heathen world with faithful missionaries, and heaven with blissful heirs of salvation.

THE END.

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